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OVER THE PALMS

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BEATRIX LEHMANN

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*and*

MICHAEL REDGRAVE

## FIRST BOOK

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1917

AN air of decay hung over Paula Mattos hill. This thickly-populated quarter consisted of an intricate maze of streets, by-streets, blind alleys and paths—all narrow and badly paved. Many of its houses were huge, with Moorish balconies and iron gates flanked by columns surmounted by figures of china animals or globes of coloured glass. . . . On the slope, the street of Paula Mattos gave out a smell of withered flowers. There, in the times of the last Emperor, had lived titled people, flaunting their heraldic bearings over their doors, but with the advent of the Republic, in 1889, these had all moved away. The large mansions, with their dozens of rooms, were transformed into warrens, swarming with whites and blacks, all mingled in the same poverty, reeking of washing soap, cheap tobacco and sweat. Others lived in hovels, knocked up—heaven knows how!—with boards torn from wooden cases, kerosene tins and old sheets of galvanized iron. . . . Everywhere, the doorways stood dilapidated. Chickweed spread like a plague, and even grew in the gaps between the time-worn stone steps. On the roofs, clumps of grass raised their green blades. In the old gardens and orchards, washing was drying in the sun, hanging from wires stretched from tree to tree and held taut by bamboos.

On the terraces where, less than fifty years before, the lace of crinoline skirts had trailed, one now heard the chatter of voices, young and old, as the women bent over the wash-tubs, talking loudly or singing. Others prepared bluing in large basins or cooked meals in the open on

stoves made of two or three bricks. Some spread washing on zinc sheets to bleach in the sun.

Children, like cats and dogs, were left to themselves in the streets. Little boys, barefoot and dirty, their clothes in tatters, flew kites of various colours or played football and marbles ; shouted as they ran, climbed walls to throw stones at the hens in the gardens or to steal fruit from the trees, swearing like their elders.

"Cheeky gutter-snipe," muttered an old woman, as a little boy purposely gave her a push as he ran past her.

"Cheeky gutter-snipe," she repeated, "wait till I tell your mother." (Everybody knew one another on the hill.)

The child stopped running and laughed, showing rows of small white teeth. "Shut up, you old crow. . . . Take that . . ."

And from a distance he gestured rudely.

The street of Paula Mattos was always resounding with voices. Shouts and shrieks of children. Cries of street-hawkers. Songs of women washing linen, of birds in the trees. In practically every window there stood a cage with a bird, or a parrot on a perch, amid tins, full of earth, in which pinks or basil thrived.

Early in the morning, or at the close of day, these sounds were increased by the voices of men employed in factories, offices and shops, going to or coming from their work. In the morning they passed by in groups, some wearing shoes, some clogs and many barefoot ; but each with a parcel containing lunch under his arm.

At least once a week there was a great uproar when the dog-catcher's cart appeared at the bottom of the hill. Women and children called in their pets. (The great majority of these had aristocratic names, such as "Duke" or "Prince.") One heard their owners cry "Go in, Prince" . . . "Baron, where are you, Baron?" . . . as the four-wheeled cart passed slowly along on its dismal journey.

"They catch the dogs to make into soap," explained a fat woman casually.

Men in shirt-sleeves, with large straw hats shading their eyes, ran after any dog they saw and with a swift movement flung a wire lasso around its neck. Women and children crowded in the large doorways and windows and on the pavements watching with anguished eyes. Many held in their arms the dogs that belonged to them.

"Look, there goes the 'Baron' in the little cart . . ."

sobbed a child.

And the cart went on slowly, the noise of the wheels drowned by the cries of the children and the almost human howls of the dogs which were going to die. . . .

2

The Marianni family had lived for many years on Paula Mattos hill in a large house surrounded by century-old trees. Though situated at the highest point of its extensive grounds, it was hardly possible to see the street of Paula Mattos from any of its windows or doors—not even from the verandah at the back of the house. The view was obstructed by the dense growth of the trees, their branches interlacing above, their roots writhing round each other on the ground.

The house, divided into more than a dozen bedrooms and living-rooms, had thick walls and iron-barred windows. There were out-houses on the right and at the back. In the front, which looked into Paradise Street, was a garden shaded by two magnificent magnolias. In former times, it must certainly have been a country house. (In the cellar, damp and grey, in which they stored old furniture and empty trunks, there were still signs of the slave quarters. Once, whilst doing some repairs to the terrace at the back, they had even found some human remains, doubtless bones of slaves who had been buried there.)

Seu <sup>1</sup>Chico Marianni had his tailor's workroom in the largest room in the house, the doors and windows of which opened on to the back terrace. All over the place, in every corner were strewn sewing machines, scissors, reels of cotton, stools, chairs with wooden seats, irons and remnants of woollen materials, buckram, cotton . . .

More than eight apprentices worked there, poor boys all of them, willing to learn the trade in return for their bed, abundant and clean food and a very little pocket-money.

Seu Chico, who was then nearly forty, looked like their elder brother. If they could not read, he would advise them to attend evening classes. "If you care to, I'll let you off night work . . ." (They worked usually far into the night.) Sometimes, Seu Chico would ask his elder son Henrique to teach the illiterate apprentices during his leisure hours. At first, Henrique would refuse. The idea of teaching others their A B C did not appeal to him. He lacked patience. His father looked disappointed: "It's on account of such things that Brazil doesn't progress," he would say, and then proceed to enlarge on the subject, laying stress on the duty of each individual to take part in the work of freeing the country from the evil of illiteracy. His small blue eyes shone brightly as he proceeded with his homily. Henrique, who was only fifteen years old, was impressed. Realizing at last that it was necessary to play one's part in the progress of one's country, he began to teach the apprentices to read. These boys, born in hovels, reared in the streets, badly fed and clothed, found a real home with Seu Chico and his family. No wonder that after a short time they began to call the tailor and his wife "Father" and "Mother" as their own children did. They slept in well-aired rooms at the back of the house, that were cleaned by Dona Josefa herself and her two daughters, Amparo and Gloria-Helena.

At meals, as well as during work hours, they talked ceaselessly, discussed politics and took sides over the Euro-

<sup>1</sup> "Seu" is an abbreviation for "Senhor," Mister.

pean war, some being passionately pro-Ally and the others pro-German.

Sometimes they whispered things they were not allowed to speak of before the children, and laughed uproariously.

Whether in the workshop or in the dining-room, Seu Chico's voice was always heard above the others. It was his infectious enthusiasm and intelligence which gave life to the discussions. And the meals, though homely—there were always black beans, rice, minced beef, manioc flour—assumed the air of a feast.

If any of the apprentices fell ill, a doctor was immediately called and medicine provided. Once Dona Josefa herself spent many sleepless nights at the bedside of one of the boys, who had pneumonia, and who in his delirium kept calling for his mother.

Bending over the bed, she would wipe the moisture from his hot forehead, caressing his tanned face : " Quiet, my son . . . your mother is here. . . ." At her touch, the boy ceased fretting.

When the doctor who treated him said he was out of danger, Dona Josefa tremblingly thanked him.

Looking down into her sad eyes, the doctor smiled and said, " It was not I who saved him . . . it was you, Dona Josefa."

### 3

Dona Josefa looked like a tired sheep, with her large, sad eyes and her long face and nose.

Her youth had been spent in a small Italian town, working in the fields, ploughing and sowing from dawn to dusk. She came from a family of peasants, descendants of rich landowners who had been impoverished by struggles and wars for and against the Church. She had married for love, at the age of twenty-five, a man a year younger than herself, who had been nicknamed the " Brazilian " in the little town. (Chico, after seventeen years in Brazil,

where he went as a child, had returned to Italy to see his relations and the house where he was born.)

She had left with her husband for South America, amongst hundreds of immigrants who hoped to improve their lot in a new country. That had been twenty years ago—years of toil, of incredible struggles, spent in cleaning the house, sweeping, cooking, bringing up children. Heavens, how fat she had grown. . . .

“I look like a whale,” she was wont to say, pointing to her bulging body.

Her hands, without rings, had the shine acquired by countless hours of scrubbing on the wash-board, by the heat of the stove and the iron. She never complained, never uttered a word against her life of drudgery, her husband or the children. It was as if she did not belong to this world.

Meanwhile, life was not easy for the Marianni household. Seu Chico tailored trousers for two or three shops in the city. He earned enough to keep from starving, to pay the rent, clothe his eight children, buy them shoes, books. . . . True, he had some private customers, old friends, well-off, in good positions, who appreciated the smart cut and perfect finish of his work. Each of them ordered two or three suits yearly. Seu Chico tailored the trousers, his eldest daughter, Imaculata, made the waistcoat, and the only thing he had to give out to be finished was the jacket. These orders brought in a profit which was put away to pay for Henrique’s classes, which were many and expensive. As Seu Chico could not buy all the books required, the boy, in order to attend the classes, had to spend hours in the public library, reading text-books and copying out page after page in his neat, well-formed handwriting. . . .

Often, scared at the amount he had to learn, he would go early to the library, with his pockets full of biscuits and slices of bread and meat, and there he would remain as if glued to the seat, forgetting everything in the world, reading

voraciously, whilst to appease his hunger he munched the food he had brought with him.

Lucio, who was only twelve, attended the first-year courses at the Public School of São Bento. When Lucio had concluded his elementary studies, Seu Chico had not been ashamed to go and interview the Rector of the Monastery of São Bento. In his own characteristic way he opened his heart to the Father Superior about his dream of educating all his children well, though they were many and his means small. The school did not admit pupils without fees, but the priest was moved and agreed on a reduction of two-thirds of the fees for Lucio.

The eldest daughter, Imaculata, then nineteen years of age, contributed to the household budget by sewing waistcoats in a corner of the workroom. She worked ten hours daily. Seu Chico and his wife feared for her health, for she was always pale, and looked so delicate.

"She is a jewel," people would say; "she gave up her studies to help her father educate her brothers and sisters."

They were not far wrong.

Imaculata exulted to see Henrique studying hard, Lucio at the Public School, Gloria-Helena and Gilberto having lessons at home with Seu Liro, Margarida attending the free school. She even dreamed of a great future for Helio, who was four years old and scarcely bigger than one's hand. She would repeat to herself with pride, "I make a point of paying for the classes of Lucio, Gloria-Helena and Gilberto with the proceeds of my own work . . ." Seu Liro came four times a week.

"Lessons at home . . . ! A rich man's luxury . . ." whispered the neighbours when they saw Seu Liro climbing the hill, breathless, almost choking. At every step he stopped to wipe his forehead or to put his hand to his heart, as if to make sure that it was still beating. Poor Seu Liro ! . . . His clothes had been repaired time after time and that wide-brimmed hat, which made him look like a character in a novel, had been given to him by a



pupil. All that was hanging from that human peg had been gifts from pupils. And everything was old and threadbare.

“Rich man’s luxury?”

Few people knew that Seu Liro, so intelligent, with so much knowledge, charged only five *milreis* for one hour’s lesson . . . five *milreis* !

Gloria-Helena was studying for the entrance examination to the Teacher’s School. She wanted to be a teacher in order to realize the dream which her elder sister had been unable to achieve. Imaculata, when she was fifteen, had already put away her books of geography, mathematics and her drawing books ; but she had gone on with her music lessons. At the cost of God knows what sacrifices, she had managed to buy, in monthly instalments, a grand piano on which, during her leisure time—usually after dinner—she practised intricate exercises. It was pitiful to see her delicate fingers, pricked by the needle, move tirelessly up and down the keyboard, whilst she forgot the drudgery of adjusting linings, tacking cloth, sewing buttons.

Frequently Henrique felt a wave of revolt. “No, this can’t go on . . . It’s a shame.”

“Shame? Why shame?”

“It is. Listen, Imaculata, I am going to look for a job. With the qualifications I already have, I shall be able to get employment in a business firm. I shall help Father and there will be no more need for you to kill yourself at the sewing machine.”

She changed colour. “Don’t be silly, Henrique. If I work it is because I like it.” Then, skilfully avoiding any appearance of nagging, she would say, “The important thing is that you should continue your studies. You are going to be a doctor.”

Henrique began biting his nails.

“Stop biting your nails,” she said quietly, “it’s a nasty habit. You’re little more than a child. Fifteen years . . . At the end of the year you will have finished your secondary course. Have you given a thought to the joy of the old

man? Have you? You will enter a Faculty before you are sixteen. That will be an achievement indeed. How proud of you we shall be. . . . You are quite decided in your choice of a career, aren't you? To me it looks as if you were more made for a barrister. How nice it'll be . . . As soon as you get your degree, we shall put a brass plate on the door with your name in big letters . . ."

Henrique had gradually stopped biting his nails.

She went on talking.

"Then . . . yes . . . then you will be able to help Father and the household. . . ."

And laughing, she added, "I know who will turn green with envy. . . ."

"Who?"

"Can't you guess,—silly? Why, Aunt Branca and the cousins at Tijuca. They think they're the lords of creation because they've got money. They keep on saying that Father should make you learn the trade, that one can't get a degree without money. They'll see . . ."

After a pause she went on: "Your duty is to show those relations of ours who are rolling in wealth, that brains are worth more than money."

Nothing more was said about Henrique's plans to get a job in an office.

#### 4

When the daughter of Miquelina, the greengrocer woman, ran away with a chauffeur, Dona Josefa, who was her godmother, wept for the girl, lost in such a big garish town, so full of wicked men. She never allowed anyone to say a word against her. The daughters of Seu Lucas, the owner of the café at the corner, were the talk of the hill. Their voices were full of sibilants, they walked swinging their hips, casting sidelong glances at men. People gossiped. "Everybody knows about them in town: they are Teacher's School types."

Dona Josefa shook her head sadly, refusing to believe such talk. It could not be. Girls, who were qualifying for teachers, to go after their classes to houses of bad repute, to prostitute themselves . . . was it credible?

One evening she saw a little urchin, who lived near by, pass her door dressed in black. He was hanging his head. "What's the matter?" she enquired.

The boy's father was a German and the mother lived in a small house at the top of the hill. He answered hurriedly, trying hard not to burst into tears:

"Father . . . father . . . we've received a letter from Europe . . ."

That very evening Dona Josefa dressed herself to go out and call on the widow. Seu Chico was exasperated. "What? Aren't you ashamed to go to a German's house?" She pretended not to have heard. She also had a nephew in those far-away lands whom she dearly loved and who was fighting with the Italian troops. Maybe he was, at that very hour, lying stiff on the battlefield, the victim of a bullet from a German rifle. But in her eyes death redeemed every deed, because its accompaniment of tears cleanses all evil. . . .

And she went to comfort the widow and the orphan.

Dona Josefa had placed pictures of saints in cheap frames in every room of the house, even in the verandah.

All night long lights burned on shelves placed just under the sacred pictures and made to look like small altars. Once her husband had replaced one of these pictures by the portrait of Eleonora Duse.

On seeing the image of a woman with a sad expression on the wall above Lucio's small bed—Lucio was always so prone to illness—Dona Josefa was startled: "Your father is crazy," she said, "to replace the Madonna by the portrait of an actress. Where is the picture of the Madonna?"

Lucio grew pale.

"I don't know, Mother . . . Father took it with him. . . ." Seeing his mother raise her hand in the direction of the wall, Lucio, in an agony of fear lest she should deprive him of the portrait of La Duse, cried out, "Don't take it away, Mother . . . Leave it on the wall . . . *please*."

His mother looked down into his weary eyes.

"Look, Mother . . . She is so sad . . . like the Madonna."

"Very well then . . ." said Dona Josefa, as she left the room.

Lucio that night was not surprised to see a light burning under the portrait of La Duse.

Not that night only, but every night after, Dona Josefa did not forget to light a candle to the sad Madonna of her little Lucio.

## 5

Lucio was Seu Chico's favourite son. Always ailing, he was pale and thin, his eyes heavy and dim, yet he had won prizes and medals at his elementary school. As he shot up in height his health became worse. Already he was taller than Chico. It was Lucio who read aloud to his father before going to school, amidst the noise of the workroom, the distressing news of the war which the papers published. Seu Chico liked to listen to him ; he divined music in his voice. "One would think you were reading in Italian," he would say. Whatever work he had in hand, Seu Chico was all attention to the reading of the paper : "Swine, those Germans. . . ." His eyes shone with indignation.

For three years Lucio had seen the spectacle of tortured bodies, of lands soaked in blood, pass before his eyes as in a film.

"Why such slaughter?" he had enquired.

"To defend the flag of one's country," his father replied.

"Not for that, Father . . . you don't mean to say that

a bit of cloth is more valuable than millions of lives?" insisted the child.

There was silence in the workroom.

Lucio reddened. Had he said something wrong? This was always happening to him. He had the impression that he was born to cause trouble. After that ominous pause Lucio, to stifle the hurried beatings of his heart, continued to read even louder.

For some months past he had been going to the school of São Bento. This old and famous school, perhaps the best in the country, was situated on the top of a hill, with the ever blue harbour and the busy navy yards at its foot. It was separated by a few hundred steep steps from the traffic of lorries, buses, motor-cars and horse-drawn carts, which jammed the narrow crowded streets, smelling of burnt coffee, on the city's lower level.

On passing through the school-gates you saw white-washed walls pierced by hundreds of green-shuttered windows, enclosing a square shaded by large trees. In the centre of the square stood the Abbey Church of São Bento, the aisles of which were decorated with real gold-leaf designs. Creepers, however, had here and there forced their way in and little rainbow flowers bloomed all the year round over the walls of the monastery, on the right of the square. A door of very heavy carved wood led to the cloister which was used only by the friars, who were at the same time teachers and priests. The school, the abbey and the monastery thus formed the major part of an immense range of buildings, four centuries old.

Because of his dreamy aloofness; Lucio was nicknamed "Moony" by his schoolmates.

Absent-minded, always silent, indifferent, retiring, he clung to his books of history, poetry, romance, novels, geography, the Bible, stories of Saints . . . things which took him far away into other worlds and ages.

Seu Chico was the person who understood him best.

For presents, he gave him books and took him to concerts, theatres and movies. Even when sorely tried by some fault of Lucio's, he never showed any sign of irritation, never spoke sharply to the boy. It looked as if Seu Chico himself had been like Lucio, burdened with thoughts for which he found no words to give expression. At home, when there were birthday dinners and gatherings of friends, he was asked to write speeches for the others to read; in the street of Paula Mattos they asked him to "invent" something for the kids to sing in their round games. Lucio was not sure whether his "compositions" were poetry or not. He put some of the images which crowded his mind together—there were always stars, birds, spring scenes—adapted them to a well-known tune and the street children learnt the words by heart.

He was different from the others because of his ill-health and his sensibility. He was a bundle of bones. Doctors diagnosed lymphatism, anæmia, precocious growth, and pricked his thin arms with the injection needle.

"Come and play in the sun," called out his school-mates from the recreation grounds. "Come on . . ."

Too shy to refuse, he went. He knew the sun would make his head ache terribly. His thin body shivered at the least puff of wind.

"Moony . . ."

He scarcely knew the names of the other boys. He lived like an oyster, shut up within himself. He was always accusing himself, even of faults he had not committed. His head was heavy with fever and full of the things he had read or pictured in his imagination.

Sometimes he fell ill, days and days passed without his going to school. As soon as he felt better he went back. The boys questioned him: "Where have you been hiding?"

Afraid they might think he had a contagious disease—there were so many consumptives on the hill—he preferred not to complain. His companions looked well and healthy, and he himself was just a bundle of bones. . . .

He lied: "I went for a holiday to Santa Rita de Cassia . . ."

6

Santa Rita de Cassia was the birthplace of Luiza, a tall mulatto girl, very young, good-looking, with large eyes and dazzling white teeth, who had come to Seu Chico's house in reply to an advertisement in the *Jornal do Brazil*.

At that time, Dona Josefa did practically the whole of the housework. One afternoon she dropped a kettle of boiling water. The water splashed on the cemented floor, but in falling poured over Dona Josefa's arm, leaving a track of large blisters. Seu Chico was worried: it would be better to advertise for a maid.

"But we can't afford it . . ." remonstrated Dona Josefa.

Her husband did not stop to listen. An advertisement duly appeared amongst hundreds of others on the front page of the *Jornal do Brazil*.

Luiza, very shy, came in reply to the advertisement, and remained. As luggage, she brought a small trunk, painted blue with red roses on the lid. As time went on she became very attached to Dona Josefa, calling her "Mother" as the others did. She did not mind whether or not she was paid punctually and often waited months before she received her wages.

It was Luiza who revealed, to the fascinated eyes and ears of the children, the wonders of Santa Rita de Cassia. Before the girl came they had never heard its name. But Luiza told them stories of saints, princes and heroes, she spoke of fabulous gardens, of stars, and of animals with human voices, and the scene of all her tales, so full of mystery and romance, was the town in which she was born.

"Once, in Santa Rita de Cassia . . ."

Lucio never asked where Santa Rita de Cassia was. What did he care? Perhaps it did not even exist . . . But when his imagination travelled over the country of Cin-

derellas, of giants with seven-league boots, of plants made of crystal and rivers of music, it was Santa Rita de Cassia that came to his mind. . . .

7

In contrast with Luiza, who was tall and slim, Sá-Virginia was a small slip of a body, so diminutive was she that one would have taken her for a child, were it not for her white hair, her wrinkled face, her toothless mouth.

Some months after her arrival in Brazil, Dona Josefa met Sá-Virginia, then broken-hearted because she had lost her only son, who was her support. At the sight of her tears and the thought of the long life of misery the poor negro woman would have to bear alone, Dona Josefa was moved to pity. She took her home : one more plate on the table would not make much difference. Time went on and Sá-Virginia grew older, more rheumatic, more grumbling. She helped Dona Josefa to bring up her eight children and bestowed on them the great love she once had given to her own son. Early in the morning she prepared their coffee, got them dressed and ready for school, and before they finally trotted away to their classes, she inspected each satchel to make sure that their lunch was there amongst the books, pencils and pens. Her wrinkled fingers sewed their clothes, cut out frocks for the girls and with the remnants from the workroom made counterpanes for their little beds.

<sup>1</sup> On Sundays, Dona Josefa and Seu Chico went together to the eight-o'clock mass. The old black woman, accompanied by the children, never missed the nine-o'clock mass in the church of Saint Antonio, in the Invalidos Street. When the mass had been said and whilst the children were at their Sunday-school, Sá-Virginia remained in one of the seats, at the back of the church, lost in shadow, and yawned and prayed, rosary in hand. She met the children at the door of the church and asked smilingly,



"Well, who knew his catechism best to-day?" She returned with them to Paula Mattos, keeping close to them, calling them by name, when they reached a corner: "Wait there, you little devil . . ." If one of them, heedless of the hooting of approaching cars, began to run, Sá-Virginia forgot her rheumatism, her tired legs, the pains in her body worn out by the years, and ran madly to overtake him, catching hold of his hand, lest he should be run over.

When Helio was born, four years earlier, Dona Josefa, whilst still in bed, called Sá-Virginia to her side and asked her simply: "Sá-Virginia, listen . . . would you like to be the godmother of my Helio? . . ."

Sá-Virginia did not seem to understand. She looked at the bed, where the new-born baby was lying by the side of his mother, almost choking under so many laces and ribbons. She could find no words to answer.

Dona Josefa insisted, smiling: "Do you or do you not want to be godmother to my baby?"

"But you're crazy, Mother. Whoever heard of such a thing? I! . . . to be godmother of a white child? . . ." and she burst into tears.

It was thus that Helio acquired a black godmother.

## 8

In that poor quarter nobody went to the city to shop. Did they not have the café-restaurant of Seu Lucas, the butcher shop of Homer, and Abel, the draper? As if by design, a Portuguese, a Spaniard and a Turk! Which of the three was the most grasping? Not that it was of any importance. What mattered was that all three gave credit and that you could pay the account little by little, without fear of those rows or insults which so often ended in the police court or the mortuary.

The café of Seu Lucas was the most popular.

Narrow, with four doors, two of which were kept open until eleven o'clock at night, it had a counter at the back

with a marble top covered with plates of fried fish which awaited the customer amidst the buzzing of flies.

Behind the counter, Seu Lucas, in his shirt-sleeves, served *cachaça*,<sup>1</sup> discussed politics and attacked the Government. At the entrance stood two anæmic palm-trees encased in old tins. On national holidays, as a patriotic gesture, Seu Lucas twisted green and yellow tissue-paper round their trunks.

At night the eating-house was crowded with people. Some played cards on the small tables, others drank and spat on the floor. Sometimes shots were fired. Once a man killed another with a knife. The police came and the ambulance was sent for, but the crime went unpunished. The criminal had escaped, it was said, with the connivance of Lucas, who had a tremendous influence with the police. It was said that he gave large sums to the police magistrate of the district. Besides Seu Lucas' café, the butcher and the draper, there was the shop of Fioravanti, the shoemaker, in the same street. He refused to patronize the eating-house. Drinking and gambling had no attractions for him. His life was centred in his little one-door shop, where he bought, sold and repaired old shoes. He had few friends. He did not join any groups, and the only family on whom he called in the neighbourhood was Chico's. The reason was that Chico, like himself, loved music. His hobby was to collect records of the voices of Caruso, Claudia Muzio, Chaliapine, Martinelli and other celebrities. Fioravanti's collection was famous in Paula Mattos Street.

"Eh, Chico . . ."

Even when up to the eyes in work, Chico would immediately get up and go to the terrace to meet Fioravanti.

"What is it? A new record?"

The shoemaker smiled and pointed to a parcel under his arm. Dona Josefa, sitting in a corner, sighed. A visit from Fioravanti, with a parcel under his arm, meant a lot of time wasted. Sometimes it looked as if Seu Chico did not remember how many accounts had to be paid. The

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian national drink, resembling rum.

postman would suddenly knock at the door with a letter asking for some remittance on an overdue account. Seu Chico would be dismayed. He would talk it over with Dona Josefa, who in her turn would open her heart to Sá-Virginia. The old woman would tell it to Luiza. It would come to the ears of the apprentices, who would whisper between themselves. Imaculata, seeing her father frowning, his habitual cheerfulness gone, would bend over her machine trying to make it do twice the usual amount of work. But Chico was not going to give way to depression. He would go out and recover an old debt, borrow money, or pawn a ring, and the account, or at any rate part of it, would be paid. He soon regained his good spirits, passing quickly from sorrow to joy, and whistling once again. Dona Josefa did not say a word. What was the good of it? He would never change. Carefree, like a grown-up child, he would go on relying on the future, when the children would have taken degrees in medicine, attained important positions. He even dreamt of the Presidency of the Republic for one of them.

"We shall have an old age free from worries," he would say, pressing her to his heart. "Don't be frightened of the future, Josefa. . . ."

"But, Chico . . ."

"No buts . . . when we can't work any longer, the children will have grown up, they will have taken their degrees, they will be earning lots of money . . ."

"All the same, one might put something by . . . we might buy some land by instalments . . . and build a house like our relations have in Tijuca . . ."

Economize? Put by money? Build? Nonsense . . . His only anxiety was his children's education. The rest he left to God, whose hands were more powerful than his . . . And that was why Dona Josefa was not surprised to see her husband spend hours and hours with the shoemaker in what they called the drawing-room, listening to the records of wonderful voices . . .

When Fioravanti left, feeling happy at having shown his friend his new treasures, Chico returned to his work. He pretended not to see the shadow of a reproach in his wife's eyes. He tried to make good the time he had lost by unremitting toil. Hours passed. The apprentices, Imaculata, the children, had all retired for the night.

"And you, Chico?" asked Dona Josefa.

"I shall remain . . ."

He did, putting in two or more hours of assiduous work, without fatigue, softly whistling some of the music he had been listening to with Fioravanti . . .

9

One dined early at Seu Chico's, often, while the sun was still high on the horizon; it meant less electricity wasted. But there was always an extra place for a friend who might happen to come in at that time. He was immediately invited even if he did not want to stay: "Please, don't stand on ceremony . . ."

Even if it was not a very intimate friend, the invitation would be just as spontaneous. Only Dona Josefa would murmur: "Do excuse us if there isn't much of a dinner . . . We didn't expect a visitor to-day . . ."

The children loved it when guests were expected or someone was ill, as then a chicken was killed, and there was chicken broth, roast chicken and "farófa".<sup>1</sup> It was a luxury to have chicken for dinner, a precious dish, so precious that once, when Helio fell ill with a slight cold and Dona Josefa made him some broth, prepared of meat-bones instead of chicken, Helio got cross and cried out, "I want chicken . . . if you don't give me chicken, I shan't get well . . ."

Rarely did Dona Josefa sit down at the table for her meals, and when she did, it was only when the others had already finished. She remained, usually, in the kitchen,

<sup>1</sup> Manioc flour.

dishing out the food, plate after plate. She only appeared to see if they had all had enough or if they wanted a second helping. Chico, annoyed, would call out, "Come and eat something, Josefa . . ."

To which she would reply from the kitchen: "Just coming . . . just coming."

But she never did.

She could not sit at table until her children, her husband and the apprentices had emptied their plates and satisfied their hunger. When they got up, Luiza and Dona Josefa would lay table again with three plates for themselves and Sá-Virginia. They sat down together, eating slowly, commenting on the events of the day, relaxing. They spoke of the children. Each one had her favourites. Dona Josefa smiled as she heard the two women having arguments about the children who were her own. Luiza, very much at her ease, could not eat with fork and knife. She sprinkled a heap of manioc flour all over the food and ate with her fingers. "Food tastes better like this," she explained, excusing herself. "It's like this that one eats in Santa Rita de Cassia."

There was always food left after meals. So much that there was enough to give away. Every night, street urchins appeared at the door of the house. The dogs began to bark. It was necessary to quieten them, and then the usual question would be heard: "Is there any food, miss? . . ."

Dona Josefa called them one by one. They shyly came nearer, barefoot, their clothes dirty, bringing empty tins. Dona Josefa filled these with fresh, warm food. . . .

After dinner, Sá-Virginia usually sat on a stone under the cashew tree and the children crowded round her voluminous flounced skirts. She told them stories in a manner all her own, misquoting facts and names, but what a number of lovely things she evoked! Stories of princes and saints, deeds of courage by bandits, festivals and folk-songs of Pernambuco, the place where she was born. And she fascinated them with wondrous tales of were-wolves and

monsters that lived in the wilderness of the jungle or at the bottom of the sea. . . .

"Tell me once more the story of your 'pagú' . . ."  
(This was the name she gave to a little leather bag hanging round her neck, and which, so the story went, was full of powdered snakes and had miraculous powers . . .)

About half-past eight, Seu Chico would appear at the door of the workroom and call out, "Children, time to go and do your home-work . . ."

This always occurred at the most thrilling part of the story or when it was nearing its end. The old woman would shoo them off in a flurry. "Off you go . . ."

"In a minute, Sá-Virginia . . . Tell us the end first . . . quick . . ."

"Away with you. . . . It's time to do your lessons. . . . To-morrow I'll tell you more. . . ."

"No, now, now," pleaded Gloria-Helena. "I may die to-night. . . ."

"Nobody dies on a moonlit night like this. . . ." And Sá-Virginia laughingly pointed to the moon, spreading its silvery beams over trees and houses—a fairy day within a night.

Seu Chico would reappear shouting, "Haven't you heard what I said?"

They knew quite well what the threatening tone meant and would run to collect their satchels and sit at the long table in the dining-room, where, for the space of an hour, they had to open books, learn their lessons and do their home-work before going to bed.

As fascinating as the stories told by Sá-Virginia were the books, good or bad, which the children read indiscriminately.

Chico neither smoked nor drank, but how he loved books ! Reading was his passion, almost his mania. Whatever he

noticed—poetry, novels, history, drama—all was eagerly devoured. All the books he had read or was reading, bought in second-hand shops or by instalments, were piled up in the bookcases in a small front room, the windows of which looked into the garden.

It was this room that the children loved best in the house. The altar set up on a chest in Sá-Virginia's room, with its decoration of red roses cut out of paper, its lace cloth, its candles always lit, did not attract them nearly so much. Nor did the terrace, separated from the grounds by iron railings, with a sort of rustic fountain in the middle where during the hottest time of the day dogs and birds came side by side to appease their thirst. Neither the pond, where they sailed paper boats with crescent-shaped sails, nor even the workroom, where they spent hours and hours playing at being apprentices, with needle and scissors in hand, thrilled them as much as the library with its windows looking out into the shady little garden, with the tall magnolias and the exquisitely perfumed orchids clinging to roots and stones.

They read feverishly. They devoured paragraphs and chapters, pages and whole books. They continually asked questions about things which they could not understand, because their meaning had never been explained to them either at home, at school or in church.

Their questions met with no answer. They would finger the dictionary anxiously, but the synonym they found was more difficult to understand than the original word. Thus they came to know the mystery of the questions without answers. . . .

One afternoon Gloria-Helena and Lucio were reading a poignant love-story by a Portuguese author. Almost at the end of the book, the two characters enter a bedroom, and the author described the emotion they felt when their lips met and their bodies seemed to be but one. Nothing more. There followed lines upon lines of dots.

Later, the heroine kills herself when she realizes that

she is pregnant and the book ends in disenchantment and sorrow.

Both were moved when they finished reading.

"Did you like it?" enquired the girl.

"Sad . . ."

Gloria continued, "I would give anything to know . . ."

"What?"

Very seriously Gloria-Helena replied: "The meaning of those dotted lines. . . ."

## 11

At night the street of Paula Mattos was full of movement.

The urchins, running and jumping about, were in high spirits. Girls took one another's hands and sang in circles, in the middle of the street, for there was no danger of motor-cars. (Almost the only car seen on the hill was the ambulance, and what a noise that made! . . .)

The lamplighter, in khaki uniform, staff in hand, passed along, sowing stars as he went from one tortuous street to another. The night-watchman walked slowly up and down on his round. . . . (Once, in Lucas' shop, he had stated that he thought cat's flesh made better eating than chicken or rabbit. Since then, if a cat was heard mewling piteously in the night, people were certain that it was the night-watchman taking advantage of the darkness to secure next morning's lunch . . .)

Men and women came out of the warrens, out of their dirty and narrow quarters, away from the walls and ceilings darkened by smoking lamps. They carried chairs on to the pavements and sat in the open, glad of the coolness of the night.

Old black women (under the shadow of this faded grandeur, now fallen into decay) told stories to groups of children whilst they chewed tobacco. Many people sat about and lovers passed by, hand in hand.



Seu Lucas' daughters, swinging their hips, talking loudly, did not stop for a moment, crossing from one side of the street to the other.

"The legs of those girls are working overtime . . ." muttered an old woman.

Invariably, after nine, Fioravanti would come out, accompanied by his only friend—a large dog with a shiny black coat, which answered to the name of "Garibaldi." As he passed, hanging his head, lost in a dream, humming to himself his favourite song, people tittered. Jokes were made about Fioravanti and the dog. To go out at night with a dog. Why, that was like a woman, and a loose woman into the bargain. And they laughed.

There were also the man who sold pea-nuts, the ice-cream vendors with buckets balanced on their heads, and the Italian with a goat's beard and hat pulled over his eyes, pushing his barrel-organ and showing his parakeet which told fortunes by drawing lots. . . .

Heads of young girls would appear, framed by the windows amidst the pots of tinhorao<sup>1</sup> and rose-trees. Boys of nine or ten were seen smoking stumps of cigarettes picked up in the streets. They did not remember that a boy who lived in No. 58 had died of cancer of the tongue from this habit. . . .

But in that warm night, there was only one topic of conversation : Brazil had declared war on Germany.

About four o'clock in the afternoon the town was shaken by the news, which caused a wave of mad excitement. Enormous crowds filled the streets, seized by the most war-like enthusiasm. And to avenge the sinking of Brazilian ships by German submarines, they broke into, pillaged and destroyed by fire the houses and property of Germans.

The crowd climbed the hill, shouting :

"Down with the Germans . . . down with the Germans . . ."

<sup>1</sup> A tropical ornamental plant.

The national anthem as well as other patriotic songs were sung. The war was a pretext for rejoicing. All windows were flung open joyfully, except one, at the top of the street of Paula Mattos. It was there that lived the widow and orphan whose father had been a German soldier and had been killed at the front.

Behind their closed shutters, what were those two thinking of that night?

"Down with the Germans, down with the Germans."

Gilberto, coming back from school, passed close to a large group of children, who, with paper hats on their heads and wooden swords in their dirty hands, marched in procession shouting hysterically, like the men and women, "Down with the Germans. . . . Down with the Germans. . . ."

They called him. "Gilberto! Come and join our battalion, come quick . . ."

He smiled.

He would gladly take his place amongst those urchins with smudged faces and dirty feet, proudly decorated with pieces of string and rope in place of braid, blowing trumpets and beating old kerosene tins like drums. . . .

"Down with the Germans. . . ."

Had it not been for fear of his father's anger, Gilberto would surely have joined them. But if his father came to know, he would be in for a good thrashing.

"Come along, Gilberto. . . . Fall in. . . ."

"I'm sorry . . . I can't. . . ."

A boy with freckles contemptuously shouted in his face. "It doesn't look as if you were a man . . ."

At the implied insult, Gilberto reddened. To show that he was a man, he put on a two-cornered hat, made of an old newspaper, and took his place amongst the others.

They were entering the street of Paula Mattos.

"Down with the Germans. . . ."

From the windows and verandahs women smiled, applauded, showing one another their boys playing at

heroes. More children joined the troop, with more old kerosene tins to use as drums. More voices insulting the men who shelled Brazilian boats. Gilberto was at the head of the battalion.

"Look there, the son of Chico . . . as a general . . ."

Gilberto looked round. It was Miquelina, the green-grocer, who looked at him in amazement, shaking her head, already turning grey.

On marched the soldiers on the uneven stones.

Suddenly, in the middle of the road, a voice called out, "Halt !"

The order was obeyed. There was confusion in the ranks. Gilberto shouted : "Halt," and then, "Silence."

What did he mean by that command? Gilberto was pointing to the small house with one door and one window, about twenty yards ahead, where the son of the German soldier lived.

"I think we shouldn't go any farther. . . ."

There was a chorus of protests. "Don't be stupid." "Forward. . . . March. . . ." Gilberto called out again, "I think we'd better turn back. . . ." And rising above the uproar, above drums and trumpets and the deafening shouts of "Down with the Germans," which tried to drown his voice, Gilberto was heard to say: "It would be heartless to go farther and pass in front of the house of the little German boy. . . . Remember, he has lost his father in the war . . . he must be suffering. . . ."

They all turned deaf ears to his pleading. Gilberto fought his way out of the crowd and said, "I won't go any farther. . . ."

The other boys derided him.

"German or no German, he has lost his father," he kept repeating.

But the battalion continued its noisy march up the steep hill.

What an uproar on the hill ! All the men saw themselves

in uniform. All the women dreamt of being mothers, sisters, brides of national heroes. It was lovely, this war !

Brazil looked even more important, on the map, than France or Belgium shattered and bleeding. . . . People talked of King Albert as if he were an intimate friend, a crony of theirs. The story about Gilberto went from mouth to mouth.

“ Silly boy . . . ”

“ That’s just what’s wrong with us Brazilians . . . too soft . . . always feeling pity. . . . Pity for what ? ” proclaimed a fat man, sitting on the edge of the pavement, surrounded by a group of youngsters in shirt sleeves.

“ Pity the Germans ? They should be decimated. . . . ” (He repeated the word “ decimated. ” He was finding that a nice-sounding word.)

A mulatto interrupted him. “ That’s so. Our greatest enemy is our kindness. It’s our greatest fault. . . . We Latins are all heart. ”

That night, whilst his mother slept, the little German boy, in his sorrow and humiliation, hanged himself with a sheet on a beam above the kitchen door.

12

Every Thursday and on Sundays, Seu Chico and his children went to the theatre or to the pictures. As money was scarce, they sat in the gallery, which the children thought the best place, because it was the highest ; but at the pictures they took second-class tickets, close to the screen, so close it made their eyes ache.

Both father and children knew the names of all the famous artists of the stage and the screen. It was as if they were quite familiar with the actors they admired, their life, their nationality and the number of successes they had had, and followed them in imagination to the four corners of the world.

This was why Gilberto, whose passion it was to keep chickens, treated them as human beings and gave his pets the names of well-known actresses : Lucilia, Italia Fausta, Esperanza Iris, Francesca Bertini. . . .

Seu Chico, who also adored music and painting, did not miss any exhibition, concert or opera. He pointed out to the children, when visiting art galleries on Sunday afternoons, the beauty of this or that picture. "Note the delicacy of the colouring. . . ."

And he would stoop to read the name of the artist in a corner of the canvas, and repeat it aloud. Back in Paula Mattos, after one of these excursions to a different world, Seu Chico would test the memory and reaction of each one of his children. What had they liked best? Why? Who painted that large picture in which the curve of the sky seemed to span the line of the mountains below? The children vied with each other as to who would give the right answer first. They discussed the works they had seen. They criticized their merits.

Seu Chico listened to them, a broad smile of contentment on his lips.

Once the newspapers announced a lecture by Coelho Netto on "The Dance." Seu Chico did not hesitate. He immediately sent for five tickets at ten milreis each. Dona Josefa remonstrated: "But, Chico, this is madness . . . Such a lot of money just to go and hear a man who writes for newspapers . . . It seems a sin . . ."

Seu Chico embraced her. "Don't you see that it is good for the children's education?"

Her husband would always get his own way. Dona Josefa was also absorbed in her children's education, and she finally agreed with him that it was a good idea to take Henrique, Imaculata, Amparo, Gloria-Helena and Lucio to the lecture.

Very often Seu Chico would tell them something about his early life. He spoke about his solitary childhood, his youth so full of tears, the muddy road he had trodden, the sordid misery in which he had grown up. To listen to him more attentively, all books were put aside.

For hours and hours he went on speaking. And the children followed him eagerly in those journeys over the past, treading with him the paths along which he had wandered, with tears or smiles, his body often craving food, his back sore with blows.

The story of that little Italian, only seven years old, arriving in a foreign land, seemed to them more unreal than the stories in the books they read.

He was to live with a brother-in-law who resided in Rio de Janeiro. Three days after his arrival, both he and his brother-in-law fell ill with yellow fever.

"They took us to the Isolation Hospital, in Jurujuba," he would say, "and there I remained between life and death . . . three months. When I was discharged I found myself alone, because my relative had died in the hospital. Alone in a new land, not speaking a word of the language."

Without being able to read or write, without knowing anything at all, unwilling to go to the Italian Consulate for repatriation, he begged at first, so as not to starve, sleeping anywhere, on public seats or on the doorsteps. Then an old Italian saw him. "It was a rainy night. I was there, hungry and shivering with cold. He felt great pity for me, still greater when he realized that I was a compatriot of his. He took me to a basement where he lived, gave me shelter, food, some old clothes. Then he showed me how to clean shoes, and taught me a few words of Portuguese. Afterwards he gave me a box with brushes, two tins of polish, a piece of leather, and so I began to earn my bread as a shoe-black. . . ."

He then tried other jobs—the lowest, the most painful

and exhausting. He had been a navvy, a street sweeper, a cleaner of spittoons and lavatories, a messenger boy. Blows and kicks rained on him. For a long time he only possessed one shirt. He washed it every evening and put it on in the morning. If the weather was damp, the shirt did not get dry. All the same, he would put it on, the heat of the body soon dried it.

He taught himself to read and write. One of his mates had given him a primer and some explanations. He treasured the book as a jewel. He was then working in a wholesale grocery firm. He had lodging and food there. He slept in the attic on a rush mat, wakened frequently by a rat running over his body or by the noise of the cockroaches flitting from beam to beam. It was in this attic that he learnt by the light of a candle stolen from the shop—his only theft!—the mysteries of the alphabet. It was only later that he managed to go to a free evening school, in company with workmen, people without a home, and freed negroes.

This was the beginning of his education. At that time he had a passionate desire to see new lands. One would think he had a drop of gipsy blood in his veins. He became a pedlar, a commercial traveller, going from one end to the other of the hinterland. He saw pumas and chased and killed serpents. Once he witnessed a hunt. "It was in Goyaz . . ."

The attention of the children was riveted. "It was in Goyaz . . . my friends spent all night long sticking sharpened blades of knives into stakes so placed that they would enter the bodies of the animals as they rushed to the river to drink. We waited for hours. At daybreak, the first tapir appeared in the midst of the jungle, careering madly towards the clearing. We heard a kind of moaning. We ran. There it was, bleeding, disembowelled, dying . . ."

Seu Chico had seen the coffee-plantations of Sao Paulo, the mountains of Minas and the cataract of Paulo Alfonso, the biggest in the whole world. He had worn a leather

costume when living amongst the cowboys of Sergipe ; he had prospected for gold in the goldfields of Bahia. . . . "The gold was mixed with the water of the river and the dust of the road . . . everything was gold."

In Pernambuco, in the Garanhuns, he had seen half-breeds fighting with knives, bound together by their shirts, until both fell dead. From each place he had visited, changing his mode of living as he changed his shirt, he brought back a tale of joy or sorrow, an adventure, a gay reminiscence, an episode of courage. . . .

He learnt to be a tailor when he was twenty. It was in 1889. He was then in Marianna, a town in the mountains, with winding streets, houses with large balconies and ancient churches. He lived there for some years and it was there that he witnessed the birth of the Republic. He liked to evoke memories of the mining towns, of Marianna, Ouro Preto, São João de El Rey. Hearing him speak of the leper sculptor Aleijadinho, blind in one eye, with twisted arms and legs, but oblivious of his deformities as he carved his marvellous figures in wood, the children thought it was as wonderful as the travel books on China, Mexico or Europe. Seu Chico would stop sewing and say, "I saw . . ."

His eyes were shining. His words expressed what his eyes had seen.

But the most beautiful book had yet to be written.

It was the life of Seu Chico himself.

#### 14

Dona Josefa was tired of calling :

"Lucio ! . . . Gilberto ! . . . Lucio ! . . ."

Where were those two ? The clock had struck five and they had already returned from school.

"Lucio ! . . . Gilberto ! . . ."

It was time for them to go and fetch bread from the baker's shop in Senado Street.



Lucio and his brother were envious of the neighbours who did not have to do this task. Three or four times a day a man in shirt-sleeves, with a basket full of white paper parcels, would bring bread to the houses in the neighbourhood.

"Lucio ! . . . Gilberto ! . . ."

The two pretended not to have heard. They did not mind whether their mother was getting tired of calling them. Let her go on calling. . . . They were reading the most thrilling chapter of a novel, about princes, heroes, knights and bandits.

At last Dona Josefa saw them entering the kitchen, looking dreamy, without saying a word.

"You'll finish by killing me . . ." she sighed. "Why don't you answer when I call?"

Sá-Virginia joined in immediately. "These children are lost souls . . . I bet they were reading in Seu Chico's books . . ." And she added, "Listen, Mother, one day you will be sorry . . . If I were their mother, I would not allow them to read Seu Chico's books . . . indecent books. . . ."

Lucio and Gilberto did not protest. What for? How could the old negress know that before their eyes stood the glorious figures of those almost incredible heroes about whom they had been reading?

Mechanically they went out to fetch four or five pounds of bread, their minds filled with the feats of bravery and sacrifice depicted in the book they were reading when their mother called them.

It was hard to have to stop at the most fascinating point. Gilberto suggested, "Can't one of us take the book we are reading on alternate days? We can play blind man . . ."

"What's that?"

"Haven't you ever noticed a blind man in the streets, leaning on the arm of someone who can see? Well, we shall go and fetch the bread . . . one day I take my book . . . I lean on your arm, and I go on reading . . . you're

the guide, taking care of both of us at the crossings, and when we return, you'll carry the bag with the bread. The next day it will be my turn. See?"

On returning, the "guide" would often say, "Aunt Branca is right . . . four pounds of bread every day . . . it's a waste . . ." And turning to his "blind" companion, he would repeat, "It's a waste . . . don't you agree?"

They only thought of Aunt Branca on such occasions; she was the sister of Seu Chico and lived in a palace in Tijuca with her son-in-law, who had made money as a builder.

Whenever she went to see them at Paula Mattos, she spent all the time finding fault with Dona Josefa, bemoaning the fate of her brother who had to work so hard to keep them, as if her sister-in-law was to blame for everything that happened. Her life was a series of grievances . . . She complained even of her son-in-law, who had put a luxurious car with a chauffeur at her disposal, and had opened an account for her at the Savings Bank. Her stock of sighs and tears was inexhaustible. She never missed a funeral, whether of a friend, a relation or a neighbour. Of the feasts of the church, she was only interested in those at Easter, because they gave her the opportunity of wearing mourning, fasting and shedding tears over the Passion of Christ, with appropriate words, gestures and sobs. As soon as Aunt Branca appeared in the distance, Gilberto would call out to Luiza: "Luiza, put the broom behind the door!" Sometimes the magic worked. Sometimes it failed and Aunt Branca would remain for hours and hours, even accepting an invitation to dine. Dona Josefa listened to her lamentations and her fault-findings without a protest, as if right was on the side of that rich woman with expensive jewellery around her neck. Or perhaps she was afraid of hurting her husband's feelings, for he was fond of Aunt Branca—the only sister that remained to him in the world. Why quarrel with her if her presence gave pleasure

to Seu Chico? Aunt Branca went all over the house, discovering here and there a subject for criticism. "Why is that indecency still hanging there?"

She drew attention to a large canvas of a nude, painted by Zacarias, a friend of her brother.

"How is that allowed in a house full of children?"

Seu Chico was tired of explaining to her that there was no immorality in art. If a nude were immoral, why were there so many pictures of saints surrounded by nude angels? Aunt Branca did not have time or inclination to listen to these explanations. She merely sighed broken-heartedly: "You are wrong, Chico, very wrong," she said, fanning herself with her Japanese fan. "You won't be able to shoulder the expense of university degrees for your children. . . . You won't be able to stand it. . . ."

Imaculata, busy over her sewing, could not refrain from saying, "I am helping as well, Auntie. . . ."

Aunt Branca sneered. "My dear, you speak as if you could contribute to the household. What you earn is scarcely enough for yourself. If it were not for your father, what would happen to you all? What would become of this house?"

Her eyes would travel over the whole workroom expressing her outraged feelings.

Imaculata felt hurt. Why didn't her father stand up for her? Why didn't he? She worked ten hours daily at that sewing machine, earning half the amount her father did, and had had to give up her idea of becoming a school-teacher. She bit her lips hard, lest she should burst into tears. She would not cry; it would only delight that woman with necklaces encircling her skinny neck. Imaculata was amused at the thought that Gilberto, without his father knowing, had christened one of his hens—the ugliest, with a monstrous crop and suffering from croup—"Auntie Branca."

The hen was just like her.

To a certain extent, Aunt Branca was right. These highly strung nephews and nieces of hers were different from her own grandchildren, placid, lifeless, uninteresting, who had simple desires, limited ambitions. A boy in the neighbourhood had once told Lucio, "I want to be a bus conductor, so as to travel all day without paying fares. . . ." A son of Seu Lucas had one dream only: that someone in his family should die so that he could be dressed in black.

But the children of Seu Chico aspired to higher standards. Henrique wanted to be a doctor, Gilberto a barrister or a musician, Lucio a poet. Was it a decent profession, that of a poet? Aunt Branca thought of the poets she knew who spent their time in taverns and pot-houses, wearing their hair long and having their hands stained with ink. . . . Once, when Aunt Branca asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, Lucio had replied, "I don't know . . . but I want to see my name and my photograph in the papers. . . ."

"You must be a murderer, then!" exclaimed Gilberto.

"A murderer?" gasped the horrified aunt.

"Yes," asserted Gilberto. "It is a sure way to have your photograph and your name in large type in the papers."

The apprentices laughed, and so did Seu Chico and Imaculata.

To prove that he was right, Gilberto took up a newspaper from one of the tables—Aunt Branca could not understand how the children were allowed to read the papers—and showed them the front page dealing from top to bottom with a horrible crime. A man had killed another in the heat of a quarrel about a game of football. . . .

"Well?" he said in a triumphant tone. There was a silence of approval. Aunt Branca's nerves were thoroughly upset. How disgraceful to allow children to read those papers which only honoured assassins, thieves, adulterers and football players. And the words her nephews used!

(They used to search the dictionary for terms which sounded fine and applied them whenever they had a chance.)

Aunt Branca heard them say of a neighbour who pretended to be generous, though in fact he was a miser, "That man is a palm-tree. . . ."

A palm-tree? What could they mean? Aunt Branca was bewildered. One evening, in the midst of a quarrel between Gilberto and Gloria-Helena, she again heard the word, "You're a palm-tree, that's what you are. . . ."

"I'm not a palm-tree, do you hear?"

Aunt Branca tried to intervene, to quiet them. She could not understand the implied insult. Palm-tree? Why, it was the same as calling him daddy-longlegs, or lamp-post.

"No, no," protested Gilberto, "it is much worse. It is the same as saying that I only think of myself."

Still Aunt Branca could not understand.

"Look, Auntie . . ." he said, pointing to the tall palm-trees in the grounds. The mountain-wind, blowing through their stiff fronds, made a faint sound as of a distant flapping of wings.

"Look, Auntie . . ."

The tall, majestic trees, with their domed tops, did not afford any shade. They were the only trees where birds did not nest.

Aunt Branca, even so, did not understand.

Dona Josefa had been aware for some time past of a change in Imaculata. There was a dreamy look in her grey eyes, but when Zacarias appeared, she became more alert and lively. It was only by chance that her mother discovered her secret, for Imaculata was always reserved and uncommunicative. One evening Zacarias came in for dinner and after the meal, as was his custom, went to the workroom. He began to speak about his life, his unre-

munerated labour, his nights without sleep, his always-empty pockets. He told them of an incident which had happened when he was younger, during Carnival. He had wanted to go to the Artists' Ball at the Palace Theatre. He had talent, but no money. Someone gave him a complimentary ticket, and he went to the ball, half starved as he generally was, dressed in his dirty, stained, everyday clothes. They thought he was in fancy dress. The jury awarded him the prize for the best costume of the show—the "King of the Beggars."

Zacarias, bewildered, began to shout, to the amusement of thousands of people bent on enjoying themselves, "I'm the King of the Beggars, the King of the Beggars. . . ."

Covered with confetti, he crossed the hall of the theatre, still shouting to hide his confusion and shame. On a golden dais, carried by tall, strong negroes, there passed before him beautiful naked women in the parade of models. Amidst the sounding of trumpets, the popping of bottles of champagne, the yelling of the crowd, his voice was still heard: "The King of the Beggars . . . I'm the King of the Beggars. . . ."

He only stopped when he was thrown out of the theatre as a drunk. The cold night air sent a shiver through his emaciated body. He felt something like a mist creeping over his eyes and he rolled on to the pavement—a miserable, unwanted piece of humanity. One of the porters summed up his case: "Boozier. . . ." In his semi-conscious condition, Zacarias heard the insult but could not protest. He had no strength left. He was hungry, not drunk. Since the morning he had had nothing to eat. For three months his work had brought him nothing. After midnight he would join the queue outside a restaurant in Sao Jose Street, with an empty tin in his hand, waiting like the others for the morsels of food which were given away after closing-time. Drunk! They should take him to a hospital, give him a plate of soup . . . but no such thing was likely to happen. Two policemen were approaching.

"Get up," ordered one of them. How could he get up? They kicked him. They hit him with their truncheons. Zacarias felt sick and murmured, "It isn't right. . . ." They took him to the nearest police court, followed by the cries of the fancy-dressed crowd: "Look at him, drunk . . . dead drunk. . . ."

As Zacarias proceeded with his story, in his fine baritone voice, the noise in the workroom had gradually subsided. Seu Chico and the apprentices, Imaculata and Amparo went on sewing slowly, as if afraid that the needles piercing the cloth might disturb that background of silence. Gloria sat on the floor among remnants of materials. Henrique, who was fond of the painter, left his books as soon as he saw him come in, and listened quietly to him. Lucio sat on a stool close to Imaculata's machine. Dona Josefa, her head bent over her work, was patching a small pair of knickerbockers, whilst Helio, Margarida and Gilberto were sleeping, side by side, on a pile of clothing.

Zacarias finished his story by saying that he was thrown into a cell infested with bugs and lice.

From a corner of the workroom came a sound of bitter sobbing. It was Imaculata, her head between her hands, leaning against the sewing machine, crying.

"What's up, Ima? . . ." (This was Zacarias' pet name for her.)

"What is it? . . ."

Dona Josefa ran to her, wiping her tears with her hardened hands. "What's the matter, my dear? . . ."

Seu Chico said, jokingly, "What is the rainstorm about? Can't you see that there's no truth in the story? . . ."

Zacarias went straight to the girl and took her head between his fine, delicately veined, sensitive hands.

"Sorry for your friend, Ima? . . ."

She did not reply. Sobs were still shaking her.

"Listen, Ima . . . This happened many, many years ago . . ." said the painter, gently stroking her face.

Since that night Dona Josefa knew her in heart that Imaculata had fallen in love with the artist. The girl now spent her time reading books on painting and talked only of the greatness of Raphael, Michel Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci. She kept questioning her father, and Seu Chico would enthusiastically describe museums he had visited and ancient churches with priceless paintings.

Dona Josefa knew her husband was lying : he had only visited two towns in Italy—Naples and Genoa. But to hear him one would believe that he had travelled all over the world studying paintings, sculptures, stained glass.

“ So you really have seen the Sixtine Chapel ? ”

Seu Chico nodded contentedly.

Imaculata asked him to describe the panels, the famous ceiling.

He tried to find an excuse : “ To-morrow . . . to-morrow.”

That night, Dona Josefa found her husband sitting on the edge of the bed with a book in his hand. She undressed slowly and as she quietly slipped between the sheets, she cast a glance at the title of the book. It was a guide to Rome. . . .

So it was no surprise to her the following evening to hear her husband describing, with a wealth of detail, his visit to the Sixtine Chapel. The apprentices and Imaculata listened to him open-mouthed.

A wrinkle in Seu Chico's forehead meant lack of money. Before he asked for it, Dona Josefa would go and fetch the handkerchief in which she kept her hard-won savings, hidden away under the mattress or in the corner of a drawer. She gave it all to him. Seu Chico would first refuse. Dona Josefa insisted, and he would finally accept.

“ I'll pay you back with next week's earnings . . . ” he said. Dona Josefa pretended to believe him. But she



knew<sup>a</sup> the value of these promises. She was accustomed to them.

"At least, Chico persuades himself that he will pay the money back," she once said to Luiza in the kitchen, in a heart-to-heart talk. "Perhaps he feels more at ease about accepting if he thinks that . . ."

She added with a sigh, "Luiza, I'm afraid . . ." Her hands were trembling. Luiza, who was mincing meat, asked, "Afraid of what, Mother?"

"Of a lot of things, my child. . . . You know, Seu Chico is not strong. He had pneumonia before we married. He suffers from liver trouble."

Luiza guessed what she was going to say. "Don't be silly, Mother. The old man will weather many a storm yet."

There was a pause. Dona Josefa then said, "If he dies, Luiza, what will happen to the children, to me?" She remained with her eyes fixed on the window from which she could see Lucio, Gilberto and Henrique returning from the drinking-fountain of Frei Caneca Street, carrying on their heads pails full of water they had had to fetch, as water frequently failed on the Hill.

She suddenly remembered she had to wash the cabbage, chop it and get the stock ready for the soup.

She had no time for anything—not even time to sigh. She went to the sink, took up a sharp knife and began cutting the leafy cabbage.

"Mother, why don't you pray to those who lost their life at sea, to give you their help and protection?" asked Luiza. Dona Josefa had never heard of these saints.

"Mother, you don't know how powerful the Drowned are in Heaven? All those who die at sea immediately become saints . . . You didn't know? That is why the bodies of the drowned are found on the seashore. The dolphins carry them in and do not eat them out of respect. Listen, Mother, if I were you I would pray to the Drowned. I would at least try . . . They do help."

She began to quote miracles ; cripples who had recovered

the use of their limbs ; blind men who had recovered their sight ; a friend of hers who had found a husband, although far advanced in years. Luiza laughed. " Not even Saint Antonio had been able to manage that, though she had placed him upside down behind the bedpost saying she would not release him from this punishment until he had worked the miracle. But even so he didn't."

Luiza was already putting the minced meat in a large bowl, seasoning it, and pouring over it, one by one, the eggs she had beaten up. " Well, Mother, as soon as my friend began to pray to the Drowned, she had no end of suitors. . . ."

Dona Josefa lifted the lid of the saucepan where the black beans<sup>1</sup> were being cooked over a slow fire, and put in some lard.

She would pray to the Drowned. Perhaps they would make things easier. Perhaps Seu Chico would draw the first prize in the lottery. She would go and pray to the Drowned. Something might happen. She had lost in her new country, in the company of her husband and her children, of Sá-Virginia and Luiza, the fear, the awe, which she had felt in Italy when she addressed her prayers to God and the Saints.

Now she looked upon them as friends, as part of her family. In the lullabies she had learnt from Sá-Virginia, Jesus was the brother of her babies. One of the songs she most loved, when she put Helio in his cradle, was that in which she asked Saint Joseph to rock the cradle whilst the child slept.

If something was lost, a pair of scissors, a coin or a ring, Sá-Virginia would immediately kneel before the altar, saying " Don't worry, Mama, Saint Antonio will find it," and the miracle happened, the missing article was found. Such a difference between this religion and that which she had learnt in her small Italian town ! Once Luiza had stuck a piece of paper on a door, on which was written,

<sup>1</sup> The Brazilian national dish.

“Jesus, Mary, Joseph, pray for us . . .” The saints in Europe did not pray: they expected mortals to pray to them.

17

Week after week, she had prayed to the Drowned to take away from Amparo's heart that infatuation for Joaquim. He was not a bad lad. He had nice manners. But Imaculata, seeing her sister more careful of her own appearance, just about the time that Joaquim would arrive, began to pass remarks. (Joaquim lived in the neighbourhood and had suddenly started to call frequently.) How was it that Amparo had been foolish enough to get fond of a little shop-assistant? She deserved someone in a better position. Dona Josefa would shake her head. That was romance. Amparo was only the daughter of a tailor, living in a street on the hill. She could not expect anything better. Imaculata was indignant. She could not follow or agree with her mother's arguments. In the kitchen Sá-Virginia would put her finger in the pie. “Imaculata thinks her sister is going to get a prince . . .” and sucking her gums, she added, “That comes from the books she is reading all the time.”

Amparo refused to listen. She liked Joaquim for many reasons: he was young, he had fine eyes, very white teeth. Also—and that was the principal motive—because her family opposed her dream.

Imaculata was angry.

“How can you be in love with a Portuguese?”

Nobody had yet spoken of marriage. It was a passing fancy. Amparo was only sixteen years old.

“I would prefer to see you dead between four candles on top of a table, than to see you married to a Portuguese,” Seu Chico declared when he heard about it.

And he began to be so rude to Joaquim that the young man dared not come every day, before dinner, as he used to.

Dona Josefa would intervene : " What harm is there in being a Portuguese ? "

Henrique sided with Imaculata.

" What are you saying, Mother ? " Raising his voice, he continued, " Brazil is suffering from having been discovered by the Portuguese. Where are our diamonds ? Where is our gold ? Those swine took everything . . . "

Dona Josefa did not understand. What had that to do with her daughter's inclination ? She was so young, so pretty, so willing. She had helped to bring up the younger children, just as she was now helping Imaculata to finish the waistcoats, for she could embroider beautifully . . .

Henrique, his veins swelling as his excitement grew, declared : " You do not realize the harm the Portuguese have done to us. They're the scum of the earth. . . . " (Seu Chico looked at him with pride. This child of his would go far. He was going to be a barrister, a deputy, a Minister. . . .)

" Listen, Mother . . . " and Henrique began to enumerate, with a wealth of gestures, the crimes of the colonizers, quoting facts and dates in quick succession, as if afraid of an interruption.

" See, Mother, in one hundred years Minas has supplied neither more nor less than three million carats of diamonds. What did Minas get in exchange ? Nothing, absolutely nothing."

(Seu Chico already saw in him a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic.)

Dona Josefa was silenced. She even forgot for the moment Amparo and her troubles. Henrique was certainly the brightest hope of the tribe. . . .

Later, Dona Josefa attempted to convince her husband that these discussions were not good. Amparo liked Joaquim. It was nothing but a girl's fancy, which would vanish in time, but one should not tease her. Dona Josefa

did not want to see her daughter's eyes red with tears, ruminating revenge. . . ."

Seu Chico replied excitedly, "What? A Portuguese, a member of my family? Never. . . ."

His wife looked at him with beseeching eyes.

Seu Chico went on: "Josefa, I have had experience of those rascals . . ." and he began to recall the years of his childhood spent under the control of Portuguese employers, who kicked him, boxed his ears, struck him.

"Joaquim is nothing more than a Galician boor. . . ."

Dona Josefa, in her trouble, prayed for the help of the Drowned. Who knows? They might give a turn to this situation.

Amparo said nothing, but Dona Josefa knew that she saw her boy friend every evening when she went to the Novena or to visit a friend on the Hill. That was bad: she feared the gossiping tongues in the neighbourhood. Why was Amparo so insistent on only going out with Lucio? There was something in that. Seu Chico questioned Lucio on his return.

"Did you see Joaquim? . . ."

Lucio, without looking at his father, would reply hesitatingly: "No . . . nobody. . . ."

"Then, when you go to Church, Joaquim does not appear?"

"No, Father."

"You're telling the truth?"

"I am."

"Will you swear?"

"I swear it . . . by the soul of Cousin Henrique. . . ."

Dona Josefa did not ask anything. She was sure Amparo was not going to drop her first love-affair like that. Lucio was concerned in some underhand game. . . . Every time the two went out together, Dona Josefa felt uneasy, distressed.

"What is the matter?" Seu Chico would enquire.

"Nothing. . . ."

One evening Seu Chico stopped work earlier than usual.

"I'm going to Fioravanti's. He has bought some new records."

Dona Josefa grew pale. Only five minutes before Luiza had whispered in her ear, "Mother, I've seen Amparo walking with Joaquim, side by side. . . ." Her father was going to meet them. How could she detain him at home? "May God forgive me. . . ." She put her hand to her head. Seeing her very pale and having noticed her gesture, Seu Chico ran to her. "What is it? Aren't you feeling well?"

"It's nothing much. . . ."

"Go and rest. . . ." and he took her to their bedroom. He helped her into the large bed and then sat on the edge of it, forgetting the new records that Fioravanti had bought.

18

Seu Liro was giving his lesson. Every moment he put his hand on his heart. It was that sharp pain on the left side. The worst was that he would be carried away by his enthusiasm when he related historical events, described countries which his eyes would never see, but which he loved because they were distant, unknown, inaccessible to him.

"Seu Liro, aren't you well? . . ."

With his hand still pressing his heart, as if trying to hold something which was on the point of giving way, he would whisper in a distressed tone, "It's nothing. . . . Where were we? . . ."

"You were telling us about the execution of Felipe dos Santos," interposed Gilberto, anxious to hear the end of the heroic episode. Gloria-Helena would take pity on the poor teacher, burdened with years, inflated like a balloon.

Gilberto treated him with respect, but he was not very

interested in these stories of men in the jungle, indifferent to precipices, deep rivers, wild animals, scorching sun and hunger. . . . Men seeking for gold and diamonds, and sowing cities in their trail. Often the child's thoughts were far away, in the garden. "To-morrow I shall open my little savings-box, and when the mulatto comes along with the caged birds, I shall buy one. . . ." This was a kind of mania. He saved little coins in a box as big as his closed hand, and with the money thus collected he bought cages full of birds from pedlars. . . .

"Birds of no quality," Henrique once sneered ; "birds worth less than a cent."

Gilberto did not listen. He did not buy birds to keep. He bought them to set them free in the grounds of the house. He opened the doors of the cages timidly, holding his breath. Then with wings spread out, the birds flew away into the blue sky.

"Isn't it a sin to cage them, Father ? They always die in cages. It is not only the *sabiá* which dies in a cage."

His father agreed, smiling. One of the apprentices once found out that Seu Chico daily put some coppers in Gilberto's savings-box to increase the treasure which would buy freedom for the little birds.

19

"Amparo !"

Dona Josefa called out from the dining-room to Luiza.

"Is Amparo in the kitchen ?"

"No," was the reply.

Luiza, her arms still wet, came from the kitchen and whispered, "Mother, I believe she is at the gate. . . ."

"Alone ?" enquired Dona Josefa, frightened.

"Amparo ! Amparo !" shouted her father.

Dona Josefa went to the terrace and made a sign to Gloria-Helena, who was listening under the cashew-tree, in company with her brothers, to the stories of Sá-Virginia.

“Run to the gate and call Amparo. . . .”

The girl started running as fast as she could. But it was too late. Seu Chico had already dashed down the sloping ground. At the gate, Amparo was talking to Joaquim. As soon as he saw her father, Joaquim disappeared as if by magic. But Seu Chico had had time to see them holding hands. His eyes filled with rage. This was too much. Here, at the entrance to his house, under his very eyes ! Amparo turned to her father, trying to disguise her fear. “What’s the matter ?” “You’ve the impertinence to ask me that ? . . .” Taking hold of her and shaking her, he dragged her over the steps which separated the grounds from the street.

Dona Josefa came to meet them.

“What are you doing, Chico ? . . .” (That morning she had spilt some oil. . . . A bad omen. . . .)

Seu Chico, whilst dragging his daughter along, kept on kicking and striking her with his fist.

“Father . . . I’ve done nothing.”

“Nothing ! You have the courage to say that ? Didn’t I tell you not to talk with that Portuguese ? Didn’t I ?”

Dona Josefa tried to rescue Amparo from her father’s hands. Too late, Seu Chico, infuriated, had begun to slap her face with his open hands. Trembling, Amparo had fallen on the stone floor, raising her arms to avoid the blows :

“Father, have pity on me. . . .”

“You think you will bring shame on me ? You dare defy me ? I’ll end by killing you and that good-for-nothing . . .”

At last Dona Josefa, putting her arms round her daughter, shouted in his face : “Chico, stop that . . . don’t kill my daughter . . .” and she carried her away, as if she were a little child, still crying and sobbing. . . .

Whilst Dona Josefa tried to comfort her daughter, Amparo, pressing her mouth against her mother’s breast, muttered,



"I'll marry whom I like. . . . I'll show him. . . . I'll . . ."

Dona Josefa, frightened, tried to smother her voice by covering her mouth with her icy hands. "Be quiet, my dear . . . be quiet. Your father may hear you."

Amparo raised her head between the arms which were holding her and said in a shrill voice, looking her mother in the face, "I want him to hear . . . I want him to hear."

Sá-Virginia went to shut the door: "Stop that silliness, girl. . . . Aren't you sorry for your mother?"

The old black woman could only think of Dona Josefa, who was so shaken, so pale, breathing with difficulty. It happened every time Seu Chico had a row with the children.

"You'll finish by killing your mother one day. . . ."

Amparo was gradually getting quieter but still saying in a whisper, "I love him. . . . There . . . I'll love him until I die. . . . I'll . . ."

But suddenly Amparo remembered that her grandmother had died of heart failure. It was like that in Dona Josefa's family. They died suddenly, quietly, after a great shock, a fright. Amparo raised her head and saw her mother looking very pale, her hands shaking, as she ran to the window trying to regain her breath.

"Mother, for God's sake, I won't say another word," and Amparo went to her mother, who was clutching the bars of the window to support herself. It was a moment of terrible distress; Sá-Virginia lost her head: "What did I say? You'll finish by killing your mother . . . you and your father . . ."

Sá-Virginia had already dragged the heavy body of Dona Josefa to the bed. Amparo opened the door and called out: "Father, Ima, Gloria."

Seu Chico was sewing in the workroom.

"Father." He came, his face still red: "What is it? What's happened?" Behind him came Imaculata, Gloria-Helena, Henrique with a book still in his hand, and the apprentices.

“Go and fetch a glass of water. . . .”

Dona Josefa, in a cold sweat, with her mouth open, gasping, looked as if she was dying. Helio and Margarida were crying: “Mummy, Mummy. . . .” Gloria-Helena took them by the hand out of the room. As they went, they still sobbed: “Mummy, little Mother!”

Sá-Virginia kept anxiously watching Dona Josefa’s fat and sweating body, propped up by pillows which Lucio and Gilberto had fetched from other rooms. Seu Chico had her icy hands in his and said softly: “Mother, Mother. . . .” She did not answer.

“Take a drop of water, Mother,” implored Imaculata, holding the glass nearer to her. Amparo in a corner of the room was praying.

“Drink a little, Mummy,” begged Gilberto and Lucio.

“Just a little,” murmured Henrique.

Dona Josefa opened her eyes, wanting to say that it was nothing. They helped her to sit up. Seu Chico wrapped her in a look which spoke an unuttered excuse. The storm had passed. Amparo, with her bruised cheeks, was by her father, and both were looking at her, everything else was forgotten. “Drink a little, Mother.”

Without a word, Dona Josefa took the glass they were offering her.

That night Lucio found it difficult to go to sleep. If his mother had died, it would have been his fault and Amparo’s. For it was he who had rung up Joaquim from Seu Lucas’ store, making the appointment at the gate of their house. Amparo had asked him to do it “by the soul of Cousin Henrique.” How could he refuse? (Cousin Henrique was a blessed memory for them. All those who had known him felt that he must be in Heaven. His life had been simple, pure, kindly. Seu Chico, who had had a great affection for this nephew of his wife, had named his firstborn after him.

The other children grew up in an atmosphere of immense respect for the memory of Cousin Henrique. There was no photograph of him in their home, but from their earliest days they had been accustomed to hear of Cousin Henrique. If they behaved badly, they were told, "Cousin Henrique would not have done this." Sometimes they would imagine that, like them, he was a child, gathering fruits from the trees, running barefoot in the grounds and in the street, regardless of sharp-edged stones, reading the same sort of books. . . . If they were ill and refused to take their medicine, Dona Josefa would remind them of the patience and resignation of Cousin Henrique, even on his death-bed. . . .)

Amparo had said to Lucio : " I want to ask you a favour for Cousin Henrique's sake. . . ." He consented.

Seu Chico would ask him, " So you swear by the soul of Cousin Henrique that Amparo does not see Joaquim ? "

A moment's hesitation. Then : " I swear . . ." he would say. Surely Cousin Henrique would not mind that lie. It was only to avoid tears, quarrels with his father, and to save distressing Dona Josefa.

Wherever the two went, Joaquim would turn up. Three or four times a week, Amparo would say, " I am going out for a walk." Dona Josefa would object : " You can't go alone, dear. . . ." " I'm going with Lucio, Mother. . . ."

They used to go to the top of the hill, to see the lights of the town. At the first corner, concealed behind a lamp-post, Joaquim was awaiting them. The sweethearts would begin to talk to each other in a low voice. For Lucio there was nothing wrong in these walks, though his father, Imaculata and Henrique were against Joaquim. One thing gave him confidence—he never let go of his sister's hand. It was as if he was protecting her thus, preventing someone from carrying her away.

What he liked most was when in the company of the others—on those occasions Joaquim remained behind the lamp-post—they climbed up to the Largo das Neves, to see

the lights of the city like a heap of jewels sparkling in the distance.

One afternoon Lucio found his father waiting for him in the yard of his school. They went out together. Seu Chico took him to one of the second-hand book shops in General Camara Street.

"Here you can buy second-hand books . . . they are cheaper."

They went into narrow, dark shops, with dusty shelves loaded with books of all sizes and colours. In one of them, Lucio began to turn over the pages of some books, as he saw other people do. An odd collection of creatures, mostly with threadbare clothes and wearing glasses, intent on those yellowed, much handled and stained books. Oh! if he could only buy some. . . .

"Listen," whispered the father, "buy up to twenty milreis."

He pushed a note into the boy's hand.

So much money to buy books. . . . Was it possible? Lucio looked at his father as if to hear him confirming the miracle. Seu Chico was smiling.

"Go on . . . buy . . ."

Lucio was looking over some cheap editions of Gabriel D'Annunzio, whose feats of war, daily retailed in the papers, entranced him.

"May I buy these?" he enquired.

His father looked at the books that the boy indicated. They were the Pescara novels, telling of wild winds, blazing sun and violent passions. Amongst them there was a copy of *Il Fuoco*. Seu Chico had heard about this book, which dealt with the passion of Eleonora Duse for the great Poet. Quickly, without giving a thought as to whether the books were suitable for a child to read, he said, "Buy them all. . . ."

Besides these, they bought other novels by different writers, most of them foreigners with difficult names to

pronounce, all badly printed, badly translated, in bad condition and with notes written on the margins.

They left the little shop each one carrying a heavy parcel.

"Father," said Lucio, "won't you miss that money?" (He was nervous about the expenditure of such a large sum. He knew that the monthly fee at the school was fifteen milreis, and it seemed as if this must be a heavy expense for his father, since he was always late in paying the fees. . . .)

"No," replied Seu Chico, smiling. "I had put by that money to buy two shirts, and I can still go on with the old ones. It is of no importance. What are two shirts in comparison with the pleasure which these books will give us?"

He stopped suddenly.

"Your mother did not know I had that money . . . nor did she know that I was going to buy two shirts. You mustn't tell her, do you hear? You know what she is—a saint—but she would immediately say that it was one of my foolish tricks." He laughed.

The two walked side by side, and Lucio was thinking that if it were not for that solemn promise made to Amparo, he would now tell all he knew about her and Joaquim to his father, who denied himself two new shirts in order to buy him books.

That night Lucio saw his father with his head between his hands, his elbows on the cover of the sewing-machine, reading a novel by D'Annunzio. The light threw a golden hue over his greying head. How did he have the courage to lie to a father who was so different from the others?

He called Gilberto—he wanted to tell him a secret and took him to a corner of the terrace, under the window of his mother's bedroom.

Gloria was not far off: "Gloria," he said. . . . "I want you. . . ."

Then he opened his heart to them.

"It's a secret. Sá-Virginia told me that a secret is secret if told to three . . . whoever tells dies."

A secret? They drew nearer to one another. That idea

of death presented something of a thrill. A secret? Lucio told them all he knew about Amparo and Joaquim, how they were always meeting, but no one knew of it. If one of the three disclosed it, that one would die. . . . Sá-Virginia said so, and the black woman was never wrong.

The three made the sign of the cross. Lucio felt his heart much lighter. He was no longer alone to bear the secret which weighed so heavily on his conscience. Everything around was wrapped in mystery. The stars, though they were the size of worlds, looked so small; the trees stretched out their arms, from which human forms seemed to be hanging, the wind was like a voice as it swept through the branches. . . .

21

That same week, Zacarias came to dine. He wanted also to ask a favour. Would Chico allow Amparo to sit for him?

"I've just been commissioned to paint a picture of the Virgin for a church. . . . I thought of Amparo for a model. . . ."

"Are you crazy?"

Zacarias insisted. Amparo could go to his studio or he would come, with easel, brushes, paints, to paint her in Paula Mattos.

In her corner, biting her lips, Imaculata was saying to herself: "He thought of Amparo. . . . Not of me. How could he, though, seeing that I am so pock-marked? . . ." (This was an obvious exaggeration. She had a few small pock-marks on the forehead which nobody would notice.)

But in that moment of abasement, she only thought of her face disfigured by the ravages of smallpox as her fingers were pricked by the needle. "If I die nobody would miss me. . . ." She left the workroom and went to the garden to hide her distress. The coolness of the evening revived her. A few minutes later as she was coming back through

the dining-room she saw Luiza ironing on one side of the table whilst on the other, her brothers bent over their books, doing home-work.

Sá-Virginia, who was coming from the workroom, exclaimed : " Ima, do you know ? Your father has been playing the fool once again. He has allowed Amparo to go and sit for a picture of Our Lady. . . ." She added, reproachfully, " It's a sacrilege."

Imaculata did not wait to hear any more.

Half an hour later Dona Josefa found her in front of the large mirror of her wardrobe anxiously scrutinizing her face.

" What is the matter ? . . . "

Imaculata turned to her mother. " Mother, if I were not pock-marked, would I be prettier than Amparo ? "

Don Josefa understood. She took her in her arms and kissed her : " What a fool you are, Ima. Where are the pock-marks ? "

22

Seu Liro did not understand, or pretended not to, why it was that Gilberto, instead of burning the midnight oil over his books, like Gloria-Helena and Lucio, preferred to spend his time thinking of the hens, to whom he had given human names.

" You're nothing but an idler. You fritter away your time instead of working. I'm going to complain to your father." He did so, and Seu Chico, furious, called the culprit and threatened to thrash him. " I'll send you to the Seamen's Training School." . As a climax, he added, " I'll kill all your chickens, one by one."

For some time after that, Gilberto devoted himself to his books, learning pages and pages by heart, and writing exercises.

He would tell Lucio confidentially : " I'm not studying

because I like it. . . . I only do it to save the life of my chickens. . . .”

At the end of May, at school, Lucio moved up to the top form.

When the headmaster read the results of the examination which secured his promotion, Lucio did not make any show of pleasure and remained indifferent. He did not even notice who was next to him, as if that did not interest him. He did not speak to any of his schoolfellows—he did not seem to be aware of their existence. He always looked tired. The others arrived at school in cars, buses or trams, according to their means. Not so Lucio. He walked all the way from Paula Mattos to Praça Maua, whether it rained or not, carrying his satchel heavy with books, and his lunch. He liked the morning walk though it tired him. He watched the traffic, people in their cars coming down to town, comfortably leaning back in their seats, reading papers and reviews, whilst he trudged on through endless streets and squares. Before leaving home he had to read the morning paper to his father—it took him about an hour!—who listened attentively, while he worked, to the telegrams and war communiqués. The war, of which the other schoolboys seemed practically unaware, disturbed him. He would sometimes dream of it, seeing himself pass through devastated towns, hearing anguished sobbing and watching the trickling of blood from innumerable wounds. One morning, going to school, he witnessed a street accident. A boy was run over and had his feet crushed by the wheels of a bus. Lucio saw him carried away bleeding, half dead, in the arms of a tall policeman. That scene immediately brought to his mind the picture of those other children of whom the papers spoke, being stabbed to death by the bayonets of the enemy. Aunt Thereza, a sister of Dona Josefa, had a son who was a soldier among the troops defending Italy on the snow-



covered Alps. All the descriptions he read in the papers and in the letters of this cousin stimulated his imagination. He always had before him the drama of the little German boy who had hanged himself on the beam of the kitchen, and he knew by heart the songs people were singing in the streets in which the ships of the fleet were compared to white swans sailing on the blue waters. All these thoughts crowded his mind and made him feel tired. Besides this, he had to study hard to be among those at the top of his class. The poor, like the persecuted Jews in the novels he read, needed to study more to humble those who wanted to humble them. He had also to help his mother in the house duties. Seu Chico did not want him to tire himself. "You're not strong, Lucio. . . ."

That hurt him. It was not pleasant to be regarded as a useless weakling. So, when there was a shortage of water on the hill, he would take the kerosene tin and go with the others to fetch it from the drinking fountain in Frei Caneca Street. It was a kind of protest against his physical disability. His schoolmates, seeing him so quiet and shy, so pale and aloof, called him offensive names. If they only knew how heavy his head was, how tired were his limbs, in which illness and injections had left their marks.

Lucio did not retaliate. Indeed he neither liked nor despised them. For him they simply did not exist. They liked football, races, basketball. His father always said that when a man can only talk of sport, one should avoid him, lest one should become like him and have only one interest in life. This was Seu Chico's way of thinking, which Lucio adopted, to suit his mood.

One of the bigger boys met him once in the corridor and pushed him aside. Lucio took no notice. Why should he? They would only laugh at him. He was sick of hearing their silly laughter, of the nicknames they gave him. If he were strong like Henrique, he would fight them. But he knew he was weak, in bad health. "I'll die soon," he would say to himself.

Once, with those sharp ears of his which he expected the grave would soon cover, he heard his father say to a friend : "The one thing that worries me is Lucio. . . ."

On that occasion he was in his sister's room, lying on the bed and reading a review. Seu Chico had no idea he was so near. Lucio stopped reading as he heard his father's voice say clearly, "He's so ill. . . ." To which the friend had replied : "It's on account of his age . . . he has grown so fast."

Seu Chico continued : "Nonsense. Just think . . . have you ever heard of Seu Lucas' son who was also frail, pale and suffering from continuous headaches ?"

Lucio would hear no further. Seu Lucas' son had died some months ago. He had been a good boy, but always ailing. He died from consumption, crying out, "Mother, I don't want to die." From the time he had overheard his father comparing him to the son of the grocer, Lucio believed that he had not much longer to live.

One day, at school, he heard the voice of his religious teacher, Brother Joaquim, call out : "Jack Andrade. . . ."

A boy sitting by his side leapt up briskly and Lucio for the first time noted his companion on the front bench.

24

The two women were strolling side by side in the grounds of their house between the giant trees. Imaculata was speaking of her sister, and suddenly without thinking asked :

"Mother, do you think Zacarias is fond of Amparo ?" Immediately, as if to excuse herself for having said too much, she added : "At any rate, a thousand times rather Zacarias than Joaquim. Don't you agree ?"

Dona Josefa said nothing.

"But, Mother, don't you think it must be wonderful for anyone to express himself with brush and paint ?"

"You're speaking of Zacarias, of course ?"

"I am, but surely there's nothing wrong in that. He's the only painter I know personally. To be an artist . . . what a beautiful career, isn't it? I only wish I had a talent for drawing, but Father says he doesn't like the idea of my attending the Arts School . . . only because Aunt Branca, as waspish and critical of everything as usual, told him she didn't think it nice for a girl of decent family to attend nude classes with boys. Such rubbish. . . ."

She stopped for a moment.

"It must be lovely to draw things from life—portraits, landscapes."

Imaculata continued cheerfully :

"It doesn't really matter, though. I'm studying the piano, and from time to time, Mother, I have a tremendous ambition to become a really great pianist. It's so hard, though. . . ."

She sighed.

"That's why I feel so sorry for Lulu. . . . He's such an artist. An absolutely first-class pianist, yet, instead of being applauded at concerts by crowded audiences, he has to go wherever he can find work, to night-clubs and private houses, playing any old thing, dance music, jazz. . . ."

The women reached the stone balustrade. At their feet the city sparkled with bright lights, and Imaculata, her hands resting on the parapet, her body pressing on a creeping liana which wound its way between the pillars, spoke no further. Her brothers, free after an hour of study, ran about yelling, chased by Luiza.

It was Dona Josefa who broke the silence.

"Have you seen Miquelina at all lately? She hasn't appeared for days."

Before her mother could continue, Imaculata broke in :  
"That reminds me . . . The other day Zacarias said he thought that Miquelina would make a lovely subject for a portrait . . . just as she is . . . wizened body, wrinkled face, with a basket of greens on her head, just as she looks when returning from market in the early morning. . . ."

Dona Josefa looked at her daughter intently :

"You're in love with Zacarias, aren't you? . . ."

Imaculata blushed : "What an idea, Mother. . . ."

Both remained still without moving or saying another word.

The wind shook the palm-tops. After a few minutes Dona Josefa continued her stroll : "I think I'll go in, Ima. . . . Are you staying out?"

The girl, without replying, stared at the city lights and at the figures which could be discerned by lamplight behind the windows of the neighbouring houses.

25

When Seu Liro arrived to give his lesson, he found only Gloria-Helena awaiting him.

"Where's Gilberto? Ill?"

"No. . . ."

"Where has he got to?"

"He left over an hour ago, but I don't know where. . . ."

"An errand for your father, perhaps?"

She lied.

"Yes, I think so."

Seu Liro gasped heavily, his hand raised twice in succession to his left side. Gloria opened her copy- and text-books. She thought to herself : "Just imagine if my teacher knew that this morning Dr. Moreira, Gilberto's godfather, called to discuss with father the future of his godchild and furthermore proposed adopting him. . . ." The proposal had been followed by a deep silence. Dr. Moreira had continued : "Gilberto is now eleven. I'll undertake to look after him, and suggest his living with me and my mother. He will be brought up as one of the family. I'm a confirmed bachelor with enough money to leave between my godson and the only nephew it has pleased God to grant me. The Baroness adores Gilberto."

Seu Chico never uttered a word, merely straightening out with his active hands a crease in a pair of trousers.

"Well, what do you say to my offer, eh?"

Dona Josefa, seated in an easy chair, with her arms crossed over her chest, did not even breathe. Her first impulse was to decline the offer at once, with thanks. But that was for her husband, and not for her, to decide. Should he accept, it would merely mean one more sacrifice she would undergo. Sá-Virginia left the workroom muttering and ran to the kitchen: "Luiza, have you ever heard anything like it? The Baron, just because he has money, wants to take Gilberto away. But God is great. He will provide."

Luiza rolled her eyes. "It isn't possible? . . . and Father has agreed?" Whereupon she started to pray under her breath, appealing to the Drowned.

Seu Chico paused in his work.

"I'm deeply touched, Doctor Moreira, but when I asked you to be godfather to Gilberto, your wealth never entered my mind."

He continued with a smile: "You're a friend of twenty years' standing. You've always been kind enough to provide me with work. . . . I know you would place my son in the best school possible and that the Baroness adores him. All this I know well." (Here Dona Josefa sighed deeply.) "But, all the same, thanks, no. . . ."

"Do you refuse?" asked his friend in surprise, stroking his strong, clean-shaven chin.

"It isn't quite a refusal," replied the tailor. "I shall put off my decision till later. For the present Gilberto will share the fortunes of his brothers, but when the time comes for him to go to the University, I shall not be able to meet the expenses myself—you well know how heavy they are—and then I shall come knocking at your door." With the utmost simplicity he asked: "Is that agreed, Doctor Moreira? I don't want you to think my reluctance to accept your proposal is due to pride . . . certainly not . . . but my children were brought up until now to face any

eventuality, and should Gilberto go and live with you he would develop new habits and different connections from those of his brothers. And, to speak quite honestly, my dear friend, I view such a situation somewhat apprehensively. . . .”

Dona Josefa began to breath more freely.

Dr. Moreira understood, and on leaving, left in Gilberto’s hand, as a trifling gift, a note of twenty milreis.

In the kitchen Luiza embraced Dona Josefa.

“A miracle, Mother . . . a miracle vouchsafed by the Drowned. . . .”

“What miracle?”

“You mean you don’t realize that the Drowned have listened to my call? I begged them not to let the Baron take Gilberto away. . . .”

Seu Liro was dictating, and Gloria-Helena was automatically writing down his words in her copy-book, her mind astray. Of the twenty milreis which his godfather had given him, Gilberto was left with only five. He had told his sister he would run down to the Rocio Square and be back before Seu Liro arrived. She was not to ask questions . . . she knew why. The evening before they were both returning from the May Novena in the Lampadosa church, when they saw, close by the statue of the Emperor Pedro I, a barefoot man in shirt-sleeves, selling birds. They approached, and Gilberto was charmed by a black bird with its head tucked between its wings, in a small cage made of seashells.

“The poor little thing is sad, away from its family,” said Gilberto, and, turning to the street-vendor, enquired: “How much? What will you take for this little bird? . . .”

“Two milreis.”

So that Gloria-Helena, when her brother said he was running an errand to the Rocio Square, asked no questions. She was ready to make a bet, though, that he would suddenly

appear, carrying the cage made of shells with a little black bird inside, its head tucked between its black and shining wings.

Seu Liro was just about to take up the history lesson when Gilberto, as his sister had foreseen, appeared in the dining-room with his face aflame, carrying the cage in his hand.

"Please excuse me, sir, for being late, but I couldn't get back sooner. . . ."

Seu Liro, contrary to his usual custom, said nothing, and Gilberto, embarrassed, placed the cage on the table.

"Would you mind my leaving it here, sir?" he enquired.

"No," exclaimed the teacher.

Gilberto hastened to open his green-covered copy-book, thinking to himself, "He must be hopping mad . . . he's going to yell my head off, and then put his hand to his heart. . . . I'll pretend not to notice."

Seu Liro, without raising his eyes to the cage, merely said: "We will now go over the history lesson . . ." and started asking questions, to all of which Gloria-Helena replied.

Seu Liro started holding forth on the war with Paraguay and examining his pupils regarding the names of its leaders. Gloria-Helena had them on the tip of her tongue, but Gilberto could not recollect one. He felt as if he were not attending class at all. Each time his teacher asked him a question he gave a start, as if he had seen a ghost. Seu Liro began to get angry, working himself into a rage and yelling, "Well, come on now, Gilberto, come on. . . ."

"I'll bet," thought the boy, "he's yelling like this so that father can hear him in the workroom. Silly old ass."

Seu Liro kept shouting, "Come on, Gilberto. . . ."

Gloria-Helena watched what was going on with startled eyes.

Seu Liro rose, pacing up and down the room and round the table, in the centre of which, motionless, the black bird was perched in his cage. Suddenly, like an epileptic, the teacher started raving, quite oblivious of the sharp pain in his left

side : " I'll complain to your father . . . I'll advise him to have the chickens killed . . . and . . ." he pointed to the cage, " either you give that disgusting bird away or throw it out."

Gilberto stood up on tiptoe : " You can say anything you like," he seemed like another being, " and Father can kill all my pets. I don't care, do you hear? I just don't care."

He gave his fat, bloated teacher a challenging look.

". . . But this little bird remains with me till it dies. . . . Do you hear? "

" Hold your tongue, you impertinent wretch," roared the teacher.

A short silence fell. But Gilberto could no longer restrain himself, and shaking with sobs, he cried, " Can't you see that poor little thing doesn't know where to go? "

The teacher became somewhat calmer.

" Just look, Seu Liro . . . the poor thing . . . it's blind . . . blind . . . and it's going to stay with me. . . . See? "

Suddenly, Gilberto felt his teacher's hand lightly stroke his hair, as if telling him to cry no more.

And when he raised his head after a time Seu Liro had gone.

The little bird became one of the family.

Seu Chico even promised to build a special cage with his skilful fingers. They fed him bird-seed continuously.

At first, it hardly ever moved its poor little black feathered head. But very gradually it began to respond to the incessant caresses and fondlings it received. The family never looked upon it as a winged toy, but regarded it with the same pity as they bestowed on the old blind man who used to wander about Paula Mattos, leaning on his stick, selling lottery tickets.

The bird to their eyes took on a human form. What should they call him? Endless names were proposed for the blind bird.

Seu Chico listened to the arguments from the window of



the workroom. He disappeared for a moment and then returned to the terrace with a volume of the *Universal Encyclopædia* in his hand. (For over a year he had been paying instalments on the purchase of these twenty volumes.)

"Well, have you found a name for the little bird yet?"

And before they could reply, he added: "If not, here's one. . . ."

The children swarmed round him excitedly.

"Tell us, which one?"

Seu Chico sat down on the bench by Sá-Virginia.

He opened the heavy volume on his knees while the children bent over the coloured illustrations which their father showed them. One of them was a reproduction of a famous painting, showing a middle-aged man, wearing an ancient costume, his long hair falling over his shoulders, and by his side a young girl wearing a long tunic, pen in hand, writing on a sheet of parchment.

"Who is it supposed to be?" asked Seu Chico, challenging the children's querying eyes that stared at the coloured reproduction of Milton dictating *Paradise Lost*.

When he had finished telling them the story of the poet, he asked, "Well, what name shall we give the bird?" The question, however, was superfluous, for, as soon as their father had come to the end of the narrative, they all felt in their hearts that no other name but Milton was possible.

26

"What have you done to yourself?" cried Amparo, shaking hands with Zacarias as she entered the painter's studio, accompanied by Gloria-Helena.

He blushed.

"Heavens, you look like another person. . . ."

Zacarias had cut his hair and nails.

Amparo and her sister were already familiar with the artist's rooms, as often, when little children, they had visited them with their father. They remembered well the huge

windows, the bookcases loaded with volumes, the works of art, the pictures, bronzes, marble busts and massive candelabra of wood. How often, while Zacarias, Seu Chico and some of their friends had sat there arguing on art and politics and reciting poems, the children had amused themselves by running about, their faces hidden behind masks which they had found in a corner, or else by laughingly assuming the poses of the various statues. In the middle of the studio, on an easel, in a golden frame, stood the painting of a woman smiling.

"Who is that?" asked Amparo. It was the first time she had noted this charming work with its severe lines.

"My mother," replied the painter. "She has been dead for ten years. . . ." Amparo noted a strange tone in his voice, and felt sorry for him.

"When do you feel like posing?" he asked.

"Right away. . . ."

The painter placed her standing on a platform. He draped a pale blue velvet cloth about her head and body, like a tunic, and between her hands, crossed over her breast, he placed a lily. He adjusted the folds of the mantle, as well as the flower and a lock of her hair.

Slowly he began to sketch on a large canvas, placed on a massive easel, the figure of a young Madonna with a flower in her hands.

Gloria-Helena was kneeling on a divan by the window, through which she gazed at the movement in the street below and listened to a barrel-organ playing. Zacarias never spoke a word. He moved from side to side, from time to time arranging the drapery. Under his quick fingers the charcoal pencil flew, the first outlines becoming clearer and the shading filled in.

"I shouldn't be posing for a painting of the Virgin," mused Amparo. "Someone as full of sin as I. . . . Sá-Virginia and mother were right . . . it's sacrilege."

She shifted slightly. Zacarias begged, "Please, don't move. . . ."

Gloria-Helena turned apprehensively.

"I'm a terrible liar, always deceiving Father," Amparo went on to herself. "I tell him I never see Joaquim and I see him every day. . . . Beatings for love's sake don't hurt. . . . I even agreed to this business of posing for Zacarias as an excuse for meeting Joaquim. May God forgive me. . . ."

Only the night before she had spoken with Joaquim at eleven o'clock, while the whole family slept. He had jumped over the wall on Paradise Street and remained hidden behind the big trees. She had gone out to meet him. So romantic . . . there was even moonlight. She felt like Juliet, and Luiza had kept watch. . . ."

"The poor thing nearly died of fright . . . she told me that never again would she have anything to do with such adventures. . . ." Amparo smiled at her recollections.

Zacarias, delighted, cried, "Perfect . . . just like that, smiling . . ."

"The smiling Virgin. . . . If only Joaquim could see me thus with a lily in my hands. . . . Oh, Lord . . . how I do love him! . . . Yesterday he spoke to me of cloping. . . . If within six months my father does not agree to our marriage, we run away. After that there is only one solution: to marry. I'm frightened at the thought of it, though. . . . It never ends right. . . . Think what happened to Miquelina's daughter. . . . No . . . no cloping for me. . . ."

With a nervous gesture she made the lily in her lovely hands quiver.

The clock in the studio struck eleven. . . . Amparo had been posing for more than an hour.

Poor Gloria-Helena. . . . Tired out from staring through the windows at the passers-by, at the traffic and the street urchins playing marbles, she lay on the divan, sleeping heavily.

"That will be enough for to-day," said Zacarias.

Amparo took off the blue mantle and quickly stepped down from the platform, placing the lily on a silver dish.

"Tired?" enquired the painter.

"A little. Let's wake up old sleepy-head. . . ."

They shook her.

"What's the matter?" murmured Gloria, opening her eyes in confusion.

Amparo, as she fixed her hair, moved about the room. Some papers and letters were scattered on a table. She picked up one of the envelopes. Gloria-Helena, standing up but still half asleep, was ready to go.

"Let's be off."

Amparo looked at the envelope. "What's that you're looking at?" asked Zacarias, snatching the envelope from her hands.

"Nothing."

Her voice, though, had changed. Zacarias looked at her in surprise.

"Do you know anyone with a handwriting like this?"

He showed her the envelope again.

"No." Amparo smiled with an embarrassed air.

And she opened the studio door which led to a small garden smelling of jasmine.

27

One sunny morning, like this one, Zacarias had received—how many months ago?—the first letter from this unknown correspondent who signed herself with a flourishing and flowery "A."

At first he had taken no notice, thinking it was probably a joke by one of his friends. He thought of tearing it up, but on reading the letter again it impressed him somewhat.

"Once upon a time you took my head between your hands," he read.

What could it mean?

It brought to mind numerous women. It had been a habit of his to caress them in this way. He had never possessed a woman without gently stroking her body and then taking her head between his hands, like a flower.

“My eyes were full of tears . . . you never smiled before my eyes, but you looked at me with yours in which great suffering was plain. From that day I began to understand you better. I know that life has treated you hardly.”

He stopped. He searched the envelope for a post-mark. Where could this letter have come from, with its strange and puzzling “A”? The post-mark was illegible, and if anything it showed a faint trace of the Lapa Post Office. Who did he know in that quarter of cheap boarding-houses, brothels, with its cafés humming with voices, its lights and cheap orchestras?

The letter went on :

“No, you no longer remember the head you held but for a moment between your hands.”

28

Dona Josefa and Miquelina were seated on the verandah.

That night the workroom showed no lights. A vast silence reigned in the dining-room. It was Thursday, and Seu Chico, Henrique and Lucio had gone to the theatre to see Esperanza Iris.

The apprentices were amusing themselves in the grounds, and one was singing, accompanied by a guitar.

Dona Josefa said, “The girls won’t be long. The Novena at the Convent finishes at eight. They must already be on their way back.”

Miquelina sighed.

“Dear Josefa, do you know what day it is to-day?”

Dona Josefa knew well, but felt shy of mentioning it for fear of hurting the greengrocer woman’s feelings. Miquelina went on as in a dream, her elbows on her lap and her cheeks on the palms of her open hands.

"June the fourteenth. . . . Marcolina's birthday."

"I know," murmured Dona Josefa.

Miquelina lowered her eyes and shook her head sadly.

"To me it is as if she were dead. I've never heard a word from her . . . never . . . and why? Just because she does not want to. . . . She could so easily write a few words . . . it would cost her so little. Her heart has become like a stone. . . . How much I have suffered! I sometimes feel as I walk along the streets, as if I saw shame in every face I meet. But, my dear," she continued in a lower voice, "I've forgiven her, and should she suddenly appear in front of me, I would open my arms. . . ."

She was trembling as she continued: "Poor dear . . . I look upon her as dead. . . . To-day I even went to the cemetery of São João Batista and went as far as the Cross. . . . I lit a candle there . . . as you know, dear, people do this who are uncertain as to where a deceased relative or friend is buried."

She stopped and both women remained silent.

After a short pause, Dona Josefa took up the thread of their conversation: "And what about Juco?"

"Oh, he's a good boy . . . writes every week . . . knows his job as a carpenter . . . a very good boy. . . ."

She sighed once again: "He knows nothing about his sister, though. I never whispered her fate to a soul. Thank God Imaculata writes just like Marcolina. For two years now Imaculata has been doing this act of charity for me—pretending in letters that she is Marcolina."

She stopped and took a deep breath.

"How Juco will suffer when he knows the truth!"

Shaken with sobs, she spoke no further.

Dona Josefa stroked her wrinkled hand.

Miquelina again repeated, "I look upon her as dead. . . ."

Imaculata came up to them running.

"Miquelina, please forgive me, will you? I arrived late, but it wasn't my fault. Sá-Virginia has a touch of rheumatism and can only walk slowly."

The old negress who also approached with Amparo and Gloria, all carrying prayer-books and rosaries, sat down heavily on a chair, complaining:

"What cheek this girl has to talk of my legs like that."

But Miquelina smilingly told her not to mind.

Imaculata left them hastily to reappear in a moment carrying paper and ink. She placed herself at the dining-table and Miquelina came and sat beside her. The sisters appeared full of life, telling Luiza the gossip they had heard, at which she laughed heartily. Dona Josefa signalled them to come away from Miquelina and their elder sister.

Imaculata wrote on a sheet of notepaper the date and the first words of the letter: "My dearest brother Juco."

She stopped. Miquelina was devouring her with her tragic eyes.

"What would you like me to say this week?"

"Tell him that . . . you . . . I mean Marcolina . . . went to a dance and were a great success."

Imaculata started writing, and had the impression, during those moments, of not being herself at all . . . as if Marcolina were there, behind her, scribbling the letter. Dear Marcolina! So lovely, so beautiful, but since childhood so unbalanced, her head full of unrealizable dreams, and happy when men accosted her in the streets. How devoted Imaculata had been to her: "Marcolina, do try and be sensible. . . ." She would laugh on those occasions, showing her white teeth. "Sensible? What for?" She passed her days thinking of love and happiness. They were

the same age, but Marcolina always looked on Imaculata as being younger and more childish. "You, Ima, will never grow up . . . you don't live . . . you don't understand things. . . ." Marcolina loved dances, parties, picnics. Seu Chico used to remark, "This will end badly." Miquelina was blind to what was going on and had no idea of her daughter's behaviour. Marcolina, after nights spent in dancing-clubs in Onze Square, blurted out to Imaculata one day in great excitement, "Yesterday a man kissed me. . . ." Imaculata reddened. "He kissed me on the lips. It was lovely, Ima . . . just think, I nearly swooned. . . ." For a man to kiss one, unless he was her father, brother or husband, thought Imaculata, was a grievous sin. Should Marcolina suddenly die, she would go straight to hell. "Promise never to do it again," she would beg. Imaculata never told anyone of this episode or others that Marcolina spoke of. At that time Zacarias had been mad about the greengrocer woman's daughter, but was too shy to declare his feelings. He had therefore asked Imaculata to help him: "Will you do me a favour?"

Imaculata bit her lips, as she did when she suffered. What did he propose to ask, she wondered? Zacarias, very timidly, blurted out, "Would you tell Marcolina that I like her?"

Imaculata remained silent. "I don't exist for him," she was thinking. "Quite naturally . . . I'm so plain . . . and yet ever since I was little, I have only thought of him. . . ."

She promised, however, to intercede. Why, though, in Heaven's name, did he not speak to Marcolina himself? Why?

"Tell her I want to marry her," insisted the artist.

So it was marriage he was offering? A thousand times no. For days and nights Imaculata was in a fever. She tore petals from flowers. "He loves me . . . he loves me not." But when Marcolina, who came to see her every day after work at the shoe factory, appeared, she could not



bring herself to deliver the message. A week after, Zacarias asked her : " Well, Ima, did you speak to her ? "

The girl felt herself go cold. Regaining her speech, she answered : " Yes, I did. . . . "

" And what did she reply ? "

Her face was aflame.

" I spoke to her, and do you know what she said ? " and to herself : " May God forgive me such a lie. . . . "

The artist listened eagerly.

" If I tell you, you won't get angry ? You won't lose your temper ? "

" No, tell me. . . . "

" Marcolina said she had no time to lose with artists. She might consider your case if you had your hair cut. . . . "

She rushed through the words, as if the lie burnt her lips.

How she suffered at seeing him humiliated and sad.

Zacarias replied in a low tone : " Do me another favour, will you, Ima ? Forget the whole matter . . . and let us never again speak about Marcolina. . . . "

After this, Marcolina no longer appeared every day as she used to. The girl hadn't the time, what with parties every night. " She is sure to end badly. . . . " Imaculata used to pray for her, begging the Lord to save her friend from the destiny of those women she used to see, on her way to school, going down Tobias Barreto Street, walking with swinging hips, or standing at open doors, calling to men by endearing names.

When the news that Marcolina had eloped with a taxi-driver reached her ears, Imaculata nearly went mad. As if one could blame her for such a step. Why hadn't she told her friend of the painter's attraction to her ? Perhaps they might have married. That night, in a tremendous paroxysm of remorse, she ran into Luiza's room and found her on her knees, praying before an altar lit by candles : " Luiza . . . Luiza . . . " she cried.

"What is it? What is the matter, child? Have you gone mad? . . ."

The mulatto rose, staring at her in amazement. Imaculata trembled, her eyes starting out of her head.

"What is it, my lamb?"

She sat down on the bed and held Imaculata in her arms.

"Luiza, what must one do to be saved from mortal sin?"

The darky caressed her: "You're not in your right mind, dearie. . . . What have you to do with mortal sin?"

"But I have!"

There was so much sincerity in her voice that Luiza hesitated. The candlelight gilded the images of the saints, and Imaculata fell, sobbing, on the coloured woman's breast. Luiza did not know what to say. Something was evidently weighing on the girl's heart. She tried to console her by saying: "Pray, my lamb . . . pray . . . everything is purified by fire, water or prayer."

And Imaculata prayed for hours on end, held by those friendly arms.

A week later Miquelina had come to see her. "Juco doesn't have to know of his sister's disgrace. That's why, Ima, I've come to ask you a favour. I know your handwriting is exactly like Marcolina's. Will you help me hide the truth from Juco? . . . Will you, please?"

"No . . . you don't remember the head you held for a moment between your hands. . . ."

Zacarias thought that he did. She must be the one, the unknown woman for whom he had once intervened between some men fighting in a sordid café in the Mem-de-Sá Avenue. Men who were fighting like madmen,

insulting each other and spitting in each other's faces, on account of a poor girl, about twenty years old, badly dressed, with horribly henna'd hair, earrings and a large blue bow like a butterfly.

Zacarias, with the help of some other customers in the café, succeeded in separating the fighters. Policemen had taken them off with bleeding faces, scratched as if by claws. The girl with the blue butterfly bow was crying. The waiter threatened her : " Who's to pay the bill ? "—pointing to the table covered with empty glasses and dirty plates.

Zacarias approached and guessed what her silence meant.

" I'll pay," he said, and sitting by her side, he had taken her head in his hands : " Don't cry . . ." he murmured.

They started talking and left shortly after. It was blowing. He put his arms around her to shelter her from the cold and led her to Arcos Street.

" I live here," she said, stopping in front of the house and adding, with a strange look : " Won't you come in ? "

They went in, and hand-in-hand they climbed a staircase which seemed endless. The slippery steps seemed to smell of smoke. Feeling their way in the darkness, they climbed three floors, passing doors from which came the muffled hum of many voices. At last they reached the girl's tiny attic, lit by a sky-light, the size of a ship's port-hole. He started to say something, but with her finger to her lips she signed to him to be silent. He took her in his arms. She was young and fresh, eager and willing. . . .

" You'll stay the night, won't you ? " she asked him in a whisper.

Besides the moonlight that flooded the room, a nightlight placed before the engraving of a saint shed a vague glow. In one corner there was a cradle, towards which the unknown girl, as she was undressing, turned her eyes, holding her breath apprehensively. Zacarias, completely naked, asked in a low voice : " Who is it ? "

" I'll tell you. . . ."

She pushed him towards the soft, downy bed, with its

odour of lavender, and lay beside the stranger's hairy body. The moonlight seemed to make her look taller and her hair more golden. And in his ear, close to her breast, she whispered : " It's my son . . . he's four years old. . . ."

Zacarias would never forget that night or the others that followed. He would call for her at the café and take her home. He paid generously for her caresses. It gave him a strange feeling to possess this woman, who in a low voice would say : " Don't make too much noise, darling . . . the child might wake. . . ."

31

Imaculata finished the letter.

She read the contents to the old greengrocery woman, who listened with bent head as if she were trying to learn it by heart.

The letter was gay and pert. It spoke of a dance, a form of entertainment about which Imaculata only knew from conversations, books and the pictures. Seu Chico never took his daughters to dances. " It's not likely I'd fancy seeing them embraced by Tom, Dick and Harry. . . ."

But in spite of this it was he who taught them their steps.

The letter finished with : " Fond love from mother and kisses from your Marcolina."

" Do you like it, Miquelina ? "

She murmured : " How pleased he'll be. . . ."

Amparo entered noiselessly. She, too, liked to hear the letter being read. Imaculata really had a way of saying things. She took up the letter which her sister had finished in her beautifully neat writing.

" May I have a peep ? "

Imaculata, who was addressing the envelope, raised her head. She observed Amparo standing there looking at the letter as if it suggested something to her.

" What is it, Amparo ? " she enquired.

"Nothing," Amparo replied, and then at once explained : "It's funny. Just look, Ima . . . your writing reminds me of . . . yes, I remember . . . d'you know what ? To-day in Zacarias' studio on a side-table I noticed an envelope in an identical handwriting. Heaven help me, I would swear it was yours."

Imaculata went on writing the address, without raising her head.

"Of course, it's nonsense," continued Amparo ; "these things sometimes happen. . . . Just as your writing resembles Marcolina's, so others may be like both of yours. . . ."

Imaculata kept her head bowed. She was afraid to let her sister and Miquelina see how pale she had become.

32

For many nights Fioravanti had not been seen climbing up or down the street, moving slowly with bent head, humming arias from operas, followed by Garibaldi.

No longer did passers-by hear music coming from his shop, as formerly, till late at night. As the bootmaker no longer appeared, Seu Chico sent his eldest son out to see what had happened.

Henrique found him sad and worn out. He had aged ten years in three days.

"Poor Garibaldi is ill . . . very ill. . . ."

He led the boy to a corner of the house where, stretched out on straw, with glazed and half-closed eyes and slavering jaws, the poor dog whined, racked with pain.

"Poor Garibaldi . . . my poor old pal. The vet's coming again to-morrow. I thought at first it was nothing. I gave him warm tea . . . but he only got worse . . . poor old boy. . . ."

Tears came to the old man's faded eyes.

Sitting daily on the same school-bench brought them together. Lucio became more expansive and went as far as to tell Jack Andrade, under promise of secrecy, that he wrote verses.

"I shall die soon. . . . Not that it matters. All poets have died before twenty. . . ."

He cited names which he had copied from notes on the lives of poets whom he studied.

Jack, besides his hobby for postage stamps, also loved books. He was strong and active and was always having fights with schoolmates who did not like him, and showing off his muscles and physique. He was the only son of rich parents and always had his pockets full of coins. He liked making presents, and rarely a week went by without his bringing a new book to his schoolmate written by some well-known poet.

Lucio, who had himself no interest in stamps, began in exchange to spend his painfully saved coins in purchasing those of far-distant countries to swell Jack's collection. (Every time he entered a stamp-shop he felt slightly humiliated. It seemed to him that it was a hobby only fit for children. And no one detested childhood more than he.)

One Sunday afternoon a huge motor-car, dazzling with glass and polished metal fittings, and much finer than Aunt Branca's, stopped in front of Seu Chico's house. It was Jack, who had come to fetch his friend for a drive to Tijuca.

"Lucio is in bed," Dona Josefa informed him as she came to meet the visitor.

"I'm Jack," said the newcomer, his eyes sparkling.

"Go right in. . . ."

The boy entered, in no way embarrassed by the heads which seemed to appear from everywhere. What a huge family Lucio had. He recognized them one by one, from his

friend's description of his parents, brothers, old Sá-Virginia, Luiza and the apprentices.

Lucio, since the previous night, after his return from school, had been in a high fever. Jack was taken to his room and immediately felt he had already been there before. Lucio had spoken to him of this room with its four beds in line, like a hospital ward. Lucio slept, breathing with difficulty. Jack recognized the little black bird, a dark stain on the bolster of one of the beds, probably Gilberto's Milton.

And in the portrait of Eleonora Duse hanging over Lucio's bed he recollected the sad Madonna about whom his friend had spoken so often.

### 34

Amparo, after posing for several days, came to the conclusion that Zacarias had somehow changed. A look in his eye, his tone of voice . . . perhaps it was only her fancy. She considered whether she should tell Joaquim, but thought that it might upset him, as she knew how jealous he was. Her fiancé had always looked at the painter as someone from whom one need fear no competition. Zacarias was tall, with a luxurious head of hair, and dressed carelessly . . . but one had to admit he had green eyes . . . very green eyes.

Amparo pretended not to understand, when Zacarias touched on that subject, so dangerous in love-making, of being just a good friend. She found it entertaining. One day, to discourage him in the presence of Gilberto, who only accompanied her on condition that he was allowed to bring Milton, Amparo amused herself by referring to an article published in the morning papers about a middle-aged man who had fallen madly in love with a girl of twenty.

"Do you believe it possible, Zacarias? I can't . . ."

The painter went pale. Amparo, swathed in the blue

mantle which so greatly enhanced her beauty, continued :  
“ He must have been mad. . . .”

Zacarias stopped painting and, with his palette in one hand and his brush in the other, asked : “ What would you do if a man over forty went mad about you ? ”

Amparo saw what he was driving at.

“ I ? I’d look him straight in the face and tell him to see a doctor . . . it must be a disease. . . .”

She laughed, showing her teeth, the colour of the lily she held in her slim hands.

As she left, Amparo pointed to a heap of letters on the chest of drawers, all in the same-sized envelopes and addressed in the same hand.

“ Letters from a lady friend, Zacarias ? ”

He placed palette and brush on a chair and said carelessly : “ It looks like it. . . . Letters written long ago . . . a letter a week, every Thursday . . . regularly. . . .”

Amparo thought, “ Imaculata gives a piano lesson every Wednesday in Rezende Street. . . .”

Amparo turned to Zacarias : “ Have you no idea who it may be ? ”

“ No, none. . . .”

“ May I read them ? ” she asked, taking up one of the envelopes.

“ Certainly not ! ” cried the painter, snatching the letter from her hand.

“ And why not ? ”

He reddened.

“ Please forgive me, Amparo. I don’t know who writes them, but they’re private just the same.”

He had a strange light in his green eyes as he remarked :

“ Perhaps it’s someone of less than twenty who loves me.”

“ Who knows ? ” mused Amparo, and thought of her sister.



"My name is Maria do Céu. Have you ever known anyone of that name who was happy? We are all accursed, with our lives in torment. . . ."

It could not be that woman, with her hair dyed golden and her frail body, who had written to him. The poor thing had not even known his name, address or profession. This intimacy was already months old. Maria do Céu neither wanted nor asked for anything at all. She did not even ask his name. She had given herself without question, and had given him a nickname of her own, "Darky." No, it could not be she who wrote every week. . . .

They were both sitting at the same table as usual, in the same café. He remained silent. Maria do Céu leant over and asked him timidly: "Sad, Darky?"

"No."

She was afraid to ask further. It was much better to take men as fate sent them, and her fate was the streets with their cold indifference to all.

"Let's go," he said, after a long silence, during which, although the clock had but struck midnight, he had drunk six glasses of beer. The atmosphere in the café was unbearable, thick with smoke. They left together, arm-in-arm, close to each other, speechless. They climbed to the room in the attic as usual, where the little child was sleeping calmly. Zacarias had his thoughts far away: "I wonder what the woman who wrote those letters is doing now? Perhaps she is in another's arms."

She was in his thoughts always now. He carried in his pocket the first of her letters, yellowed with time, in which she had written that sentence which had touched him so profoundly: "You, of course, no longer remember the head you held for a moment between your hands. . . ." He carried it about with him for luck. "Who knows, it may bring luck. . . ." It seemed as if indeed luck had strayed

in through his wide studio windows, for never had he had so many commissions for portraits. He had even won a prize in the last National Exhibition. His name often appeared in the art critics' reviews, where his work was accorded high praise. What did the unknown woman look like? He knew so few people. Since his mother had died, he only visited the house of Seu Chico and cheap cafés, brothels and circles frequented by artists. These letters, though, inspired him. Why didn't she write every day? On Thursdays he anxiously awaited the post.

"Darky . . ."

Maria do Céu was afraid. He was so far away, so far, and she was there, within reach, waiting. Again the thought came back to him: "Perhaps my unknown one is at this moment in another's arms. . . ."

With rage in his heart, as if he wished by lust to forget the woman who seemed to be betraying him, he possessed her with a violence and passion she had never known before. Maria do Céu, with beating heart, thought: "God! How poor Darky must be suffering!"

### 36

Fioravanti was busy in his garden patch behind the shop, tending his rose-trees, when Garibaldi, leaping from his straw bedding, with foaming jaws, whining loud, made for the street with huge bounds.

Seeing him tearing around brought panic to the street, which that night was full of people sitting in the chairs they had brought out on to the pavement, the children playing round games.

An old man cried: "Gosh! Garibaldi's gone mad!"

It was true, Garibaldi seemed mad.

A general uproar ensued, shrieks, children fleeing terrified, tripping up, falling over one another. . . . Doors banged, people shook with fear behind their shutters, yelling: "Mad dog . . . mad dog!"

Garibaldi in his rage hurled himself against a boy that had fallen, tearing at him with his slobbering jaws.

"Kill the dog . . . kill him. . . ."

Garibaldi fled down the street. Stones and clods were hurled at him. From time to time the dog stopped, with staring eyes, as if to find out from which direction the stones came.

"Mad dog . . . kill him . . . kill him . . . ." the cries re-echoed.

Fioravanti heard these strange noises from the street.

He glanced at the straw bedding and saw it empty. At once he guessed the truth. Poor old Garibaldi! He rushed into the street and there saw his pet a hundred yards away slavering and giving agonized leaps, with tongue and eyes protruding.

Garibaldi came running to him. It was too late. Suddenly the report of a gun was heard. The dog stopped. Another shot, this time, found its mark. The dog tottered, faltered, twisted in agony and with a groan fell in a pool of blood. Fioravanti rushed up to it as it lay dying. In a few moments it was all over, and the dog, with stiffened legs and fallen head, lay motionless. Suddenly, from every corner, crowds rushed once again into the street, gathering round the dead dog that Fioravanti took in his arms, deaf to their words, to the cry of the child that had been bitten, and to the clanging of the approaching ambulance, hastily called by telephone by Seu Lucas.

Slowly Fioravanti crossed the street carrying the bleeding body of his old companion, already cold, like a child in his arms.

Aside from Jack, Lucio's only other friends were his father's. He was especially fond of Lulu, who earned his living playing the piano in night-clubs and private houses, and who was daily getting thinner from want. His greatest

favourite, however, was Panizoni, with his red face and short fat body, who spent his time drinking in order to forget his foiled ambition to be a successful baritone. Lucio was greatly attached to him, and showed him his writings, which his friend never failed to praise extravagantly. Pointing to the sickly child, he used to say : " He'll really be a great lad, some day."

They used to go out together, and many times Lucio returned supporting as best he could the sagging body of Panizoni, redder in the face than ever. This used to annoy Seu Chico greatly. " That dog. . . . How dare he take you with him on his drunken rounds ? "

Lucio became frightened. " No, Father. It was so hot and Panizoni got thirsty. It was I who actually suggested to him to take a nip." In order to excuse him as much as possible, he added : " You know how these singers must keep their pipes cool . . . "

" Who put this idea in your head ? "

Lucio lied, " Nobody at all."

He was merely repeating Panizoni's own excuses.

With friends like these, Lucio could see nothing entertaining in the sort of moving pictures and books which his companions liked so much. What did he care for Max Linder, or Tom Mix, or William Farnum ? Or for adventure or detective stories ? He preferred lengthy sensational films, and books about suffering souls and sad subjects appealed to him.

His favourite haunt, in the world of which he knew so little, was that room with its windows opening out on to the back garden, furnished only with shelves laden with books. He remained in it for hours, seated in an old chair with torn coverings, or else lying on the floor. He read everything he could lay his hands on. Seu Chico had the habit of reading everything he came across without any set plan or purpose, and this weakness seemed to have been inherited by his son. Dostoevsky, Dumas, Daudet, Zevaco,

Verga, D'Annunzio, Eca de Queiroz, Alencar, Macedo—he read them all, in cheap editions, and even these were second-hand. Dreadful translations. But already at twelve Lucio had read almost all Tolstoi's works, weeping at the fate of lovely Anna Karenine and tortured with anguish by the pages of "Infancy" and "Adolescence."

It was strange that he, brought up in religious surroundings, and educated by priests, had read all those pages, so often quivering with passion and burning with sex, without perceiving any evil in them.

Absent-minded, self-centred, hardly ever speaking, but studying hard, Lucio finally reached the top form. As it was impossible for the teachers not to recognize his merits and his hard work, his schoolmates took it out of him by bullying him.

This fellow, a mere tailor's son—probably the only one in the class who was the son of a workman—put on the airs of an aristocrat! He was always distant, always bent over some volume, knew things and books which were only for grown-up people, frequented theatres and concerts, and flaunted before them his handsome face, with its clear skin and expression of simplicity. The other boys saw themselves reflected in his wide eyes as they actually were. Some of them even gloried in the treatments they were receiving for venereal diseases. They declared war on him. Their hostility was hidden at first, then open and violent. They called him "The Dandy" or "Mother's Darling," but Lucio appeared not to hear or understand them. He lived in a dream, a world of his own.

One of his schoolmates one day let out a tit-bit to the class, which only Jack knew about, namely, that Lucio was a poet. He had seen a small example of his work, a trifling lyric, in a corner of a page of the *Polichinello Review*.

At that time this paper was written for young people, and Lucio, on his father's advice, and egged on by Panizoni, had sent one of his poems to this somewhat obscure publication.

For weeks he had patiently awaited the appearance of this effort of his in print. With what patience he read each weekly issue after sending in his work, eagerly scanning the "Birdcage" column for a criticism! At last, after much waiting, he saw his name printed in full, with the reviewer's comments: "Good work. Await publication." How anxiously he waited! Every day, on his return from school, he would stroll down the Mem-de-Sá Avenue, near the Invalidos Street, where the *Polichinello* office was situated. He would stop in front of the open doors, where he could see the presses turning and dozens of typesetters at work preparing large or small frames. He would stop, fascinated by the linotypes. None of these workmen, with their quick hands and eyes, moving levers, rolls, cylinders and cases, could have guessed that there before them was standing one of the future editors of their weekly.

After an endless wait, *Polichinello* printed his verses about the fate of a rose blown by the fitful wind. . . .

This, however, was not the first time Lucio had seen his work in print. In Rio a review had formerly been published in Italian and Portuguese with the title *The New Italy*, to which his father had subscribed. This paper, like everything that belonged to Chico, had fallen into Lucio's hands. He read the Portuguese text and tried to guess the lovely things that were printed in the language of his father's country of origin.

Seu Chico suggested: "Why not send one of your efforts to *New Italy*?" and Henrique had copied out in his clear hand, so useful for Seu Lucas' ledgers, a poem by Lucio entitled "The Sigh of a River."

It consisted of a few lines about a river, full of the sky, the trees and the landscapes it reflected, and spoke of life and death. One of the editors of the paper was a certain Ernesto Rapallo. Lucio read his compositions and admired him. He dedicated "The Sigh of a River" to him. It

appeared in the following issue of *New Italy*, and was actually illustrated. What a treat that had been !

To this review, as well as to the *International*, a weekly consisting of four pages, whose offices were in Acre Street, near his school, Lucio had contributed. Under the influence of the many books he had read, laden with imagery, and inspired by hearing every kind of talk, Lucio forgot his age and attempted impulsively to write on the most complex and difficult problems. The words flowed from him with the same ease as other children experience in playing with lead soldiers or running about.

His anæmia compelled him to spend long days on his bed with fever, quite alone. His father had to be at his sewing-machine, his mother had to look after the huge house, and his brothers dared not miss school. On these occasions he devoured his father's books, dreamt his dreams and attempted to imagine in a little measure the lives of those that peopled the novels he read.

Seu Chico once made him a present of *The Art of Making Verses*, written by two of the most popular poets of the day. This book disclosed another world, one of rhymes and of the music of words.

He soon learnt to write verses of six, seven, eight, nine and ten feet. They seemed to come naturally. For hours on end, even when talking of everyday things, he would be thinking how he could fit his thoughts into verses of certain metres. Even when studying geography, history or Portuguese, and in the barren hours devoted to mathematics, it was the same.

Verses of twelve feet, Alexandrines, he found difficult. They seemed to him the hardest to learn and to write, with all their mystery and charm.

He read over and over again the chapter in his manual on the Alexandrine metre, but it did not seem to help him.

He dissected the authors of the anthology belonging to his father. The same difficulty occurred. . . . He per-

ceived from where came the light, but did not know where to search for or find the lamp which held the flame.

He decided therefore to visit Dona Leonor, the head of the free school to which he had gone for six years. She was a poet of considerable fame, her voice and gestures betraying her innate kindness.

"I'd like you to teach me one thing, Dona Leonor. . . ." He mentioned his difficulty and asked her to help him with his problem. Dona Leonor was charmed. She knew he used to be top of her school in Portuguese, but did not know he was a poet, and the discovery delighted her. She took him to the rest-room, sat by his side, and spent a considerable time elucidating the mystery of Alexandrines. Lucio drank in her words.

His verses appeared in *New Italy* as well as in the *Young People's Journal*, the *Hammer* or the *Eagle*. Sometimes he had the courage to sign them and was prepared to face the severe criticism of the reviewers of these efforts, who, in a special column, pointed out their faults, but seldom encouraged the novices with good advice. At other times, and more often, he invented pseudonyms, hiding behind the small disguise of a name selected at random.

Panizoni, Lulu and Zacarias, with his father at their head, all encouraged him. Before he sent his verses in, they would read them, point out necessary corrections and suggest alterations.

But none of the publications in which the name of Lucio Marianni appeared as an author was usually read by his schoolmates. His misfortune had been to send his work to *Polichinello*.

As a result, his secret, hitherto so well kept, had come to light and was the subject of all his schoolfellows' jibes.

"Moony," "Poet," they called him, in mockery, showing their milk-white teeth as they laughed.

His little effort in *Polichinello* about a rose whose petal the wind blew away, was made fun of in every way.

And the friendship between Jack and Lucio annoyed



them. The boys thought of a new nickname for both, calling Lucio the "Rose" and Jack the "Wind."

They took care, though, never to say this before Jack, whose strong and violent hands they feared.

38

For ten days Lucio did not leave his bed, suffering once again from a terrible cold with a touch of fever.

Of all his schoolmates only Jack came to see him. He came almost every day, bringing books and fruit. Once Dona Josefa found them reading aloud the thrilling pages of some romance.

Lucio was a little better and in order to follow the reading more easily, was propped up in bed with pillows around his skinny frame.

"What's that you're reading?" she asked.

"*Notre Dame de Paris* . . ."

Dona Josefa thought the title attractive and, feeling sure it must be a religious book, left them to themselves, happy and free in a strange Paris, peopled by murderers, cardinals, beggars and monsters.

Jack was almost one of the family. They liked him well, and Seu Chico went so far as to give him an album full of stamps which had meant half a day's work. Not that he begrudged it, for at least Jack was genuinely fond of the little poet.

39

One afternoon Aunt Branca appeared. This time not to reprove but to play the part of a fairy godmother. She had come on a mission.

Dona Chiquinha de Almeida, a descendant of the extinct line of Viscounts of Almeida, and a friend of hers, had entrusted her with an important mission. Would Seu Chico

allow one of his daughters to go daily to her house, high above Paula Mattos Street, a two-storied immensity with forty rooms, surrounded by gardens and high brick walls? Dona Chiquinha was old and lived alone with Inacia, her former slave, who was quite illiterate, and she wanted somebody to read to her every afternoon for at least two hours the daily papers as well as books from her vast library.

Aunt Branca had therefore thought of Gloria-Helena. Didn't she like reading? What better opportunity therefore? She would be reading aloud and would earn a little something as well, and thus help the family. Dona Chiquinha was prepared to pay twenty milreis weekly.

Seu Chico listened to the suggestion and said, "I'll think it over. . . ."

"Think nothing. . . . You mean to say you'll refuse eighty milreis a month? . . ." snapped his sister.

Seu Chico was thinking of Seu Liro's lessons and the fact that Gloria-Helena was preparing herself for the exams.

Gloria-Helena was the first to settle the matter :

"I'll go, Father."

"And your lessons? "

"We'll find a way. . . . Dona Chiquinha wants me in the afternoon. I'll go. Seu Liro can surely come in the morning. That'll be the way out. . . ."

Aunt Branca smiled triumphantly, adding, however :

"To-day is the fifteenth of July. Dona Chiquinha is superstitious and would prefer to start on the first of the month."

Night was falling and Aunt Branca made a motion as if to take her leave.

"Won't you stay to dinner? " asked Dona Josefa, showing discreetly that she hoped the invitation would be refused.

Aunt Branca was in a hurry to go as it happened, and, carelessly slinging over her shoulders her rich fox scarf, she departed, accompanied by her nieces to the entrance gates of the grounds, where her car was awaiting her.

The door opened and in walked Seu Chico, perspiring :  
 "I've got news, Lucio. . . ."

Lucio still had a touch of fever and was lying on his bed. Before he could open his mouth, his father burst out with his story : "I've bought a typewriter. . . ."

Lucio could not believe it.

"It cost eight hundred milreis."

Eight hundred milreis ! Was his father mad ? Eight hundred milreis ! Where and when would he get the money ?

"I bought it by instalments of fifty milreis a month. I put a hundred down . . ."

That hundred-milreis deposit on the typewriter was a fortune ! He wondered where he could have got it. Seu Chico explained how it all had happened. . . . He had gone to pay the rent of the house, when he had noticed an American typewriter in a shop-window. . . . The advantages his children would gain by learning to type flashed through his mind.

He had walked into the shop and asked for details. A salesman told him that by paying a hundred milreis down he would have the typewriter delivered to his home on the same day on condition that he paid the balance in fifty-milreis instalments.

"What then, Father ?"

"Well, I thought hard to myself : 'Here you've got a golden opportunity, Chico. . . .' So I didn't hesitate and paid down the hundred and signed endless promissory notes. . . . That's all. . . ."

"But . . ."

His father was aglow with enthusiasm.

"Now look here, Lucio, nobody is to know. . . ." He sat by the bed : "I haven't paid the rent. . . . I put it off until next week . . . and I used part of the money to pay the deposit. . . ."

He smiled happily.

"You know when I want a thing I know how to get it. I've already been to the landlord and spun him a fine yarn. Your illness, my boy . . . I used it as a pretext to explain the delay in payment. The landlord fell for it and gave me a further ten days to pay off the arrears. . . ." His eyes sparkling with contentment, he added: "You never thought you'd ever have a typewriter, did you now?"

At that moment Henrique entered. He already knew of the purchase and was thrilled.

"Let's see which of us will learn to type quickest. . . ."

Lucio was troubled: "Do you mean to say one learns just like that, without a teacher?"

Seu Chico had not thought of this problem. He quickly recovered and said: "It's just a matter of practice. . . . You start by tapping the keys and learning the positions of the different letters by heart. . . . The rest is easy. . . ."

Henrique spoke of the advantages of knowing how to type when looking for work in offices or Government departments. Seu Chico listened for a moment and said: "All that's very true . . . but would you like to know why I bought the typewriter; the real reason, I mean?"

He lowered his voice, perhaps Dona Josefa might be near, and he was not anxious for sighs and reproaches:

"Ever since I read that book, I can't remember by whom, about the children who played at running a newspaper of their own, I got it into my head that you too would have your own paper. . . ."

"Why, Father, I thought . . ." cut in Henrique.

"You don't think anything. . . . The typewriter was bought to enable you to start a paper of your own."

Henrique said not a word more. His main preoccupation was to find a job. . . . He hated the idea of living at his father's expense and seeing Imaculata tied to her sewing-machine. He therefore did not approve of Gloria-Helena's idea of wasting her voice to soothe the wearied ears of Dona Chiquinha.

"Father, what shall we call the paper?" queried Lucio, his eyes shining at the prospect of one of his dearest dreams being about to be realized. At Dona Leonor's school he had won both gold and silver medals as editor of a manuscript magazine. He was going to edit another of much greater importance . . . and typewritten. . . .

Seu Chico twisted his already greying moustache.

"Why not *The Clarion*?" suggested Henrique.

"No. I don't care for it . . . sounds military," said his father.

"*The Young Man's Post*?"

"No. . . ."

"Well, then . . ."

"Let's see," added Chico, "something that will bring to mind a bright sunny day. . . ."

"I've got it: *Spring*," murmured Lucio with an air of triumph.

Henrique repeated: "*Spring*. That's good." (He had already forgotten his plan to get a job, to think of his future and help the family. Seu Chico had infected them with his dreams and introduced them to a world very different from the one they lived in.)

Seu Chico gave his approval: "*Spring* it shall be. . . ."

At that moment a bird settled on the ledge of the open window. It carried a flower-petal in its beak.

"There's your name for a paper . . ." pointed out Seu Chico, "*The Swallow*. It's another word for a sunny spring day. . . . *The Swallow*. . . ."

A few days after Garibaldi's death, Fioravanti once again opened his shoemaker's shop, as usual.

As time went on he became sadder, each day his head bent lower.

At night he walked up and down the street, with slow

steps, and as he passed, no one felt in the mood to be gay.

"He's still suffering. . . ."

"Poor old man. . . ."

"He must be a bit mad, though, don't you think? Fancy mourning for a dog. . . ."

Fioravanti heard none of this. A few nights before, he had tied his pet's body in a sack and thrown it into the sea. He had wept as if his heart would break, as if he had lost the last love that would come his way, and from that day he invariably wore mourning.

42

Everywhere the landscape sparkled and the sun sent down its burning rays on the roof-top and on the stone flags of the terrace.

The butterflies appeared like winged jewels. Luiza, busy washing clothes, usually sang as she worked, but that morning after a talk with Sá-Virginia, her head started to ache and she remained silent.

Dona Josefa, somewhat surprised, called out :

"What's the matter, Luiza? Not well?"

"It's nothing, Mother."

Luiza muttered to herself, "That can't be anything but old blackie's gossip. . . . Nasty-minded people . . . taking things for granted." And why? Just because every night, after work was over, she liked having a chat with Eurico. He was one of the most promising apprentices . . . a bright boy! They talked about airy nothings . . . about films they had seen, and little incidents in their lives . . . Carnival, adventures, religious feasts. . . . She was mad about Carnival, and always let herself go on those three nights. So was Eurico. He had in fact at her insistence decided to join a Carnival group called "The Flower of the Mountain," whose headquarters were in Orient Street.

One night, when the children and the apprentices were playing at hide-and-seek in the grounds of the house, she had hidden herself behind a wooden shed by the jaboticaba-trees and the water-tank. A few feet off Gilberto, crouching on the ground, had hidden behind a tuft of undergrowth. Mad cries of "Time ! Time !" rang out, and it was Eurico's turn to search.

"I've got you . . ." he cried, catching her and holding her with his strong hands and looking into her eyes.

Gilberto bolted from his hiding-place, and the two remained alone in the dusk amongst the trees. As Eurico, with his coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled back, seized her, Luiza felt a strange swooning sensation in his hasty embrace, which came from the nearness of his body, his shirt moist with the sweat of his exertions, the warm night and an odour to her unknown. Her smooth arms were tense against his hairy ones.

"I've got you," he repeated triumphantly, without setting Luiza free, their lips close to each other.

All of this happened in a flash of time, and in a moment she had freed herself, still dazed.

She returned to the game, running all over the extensive grounds, but afterwards she could not sleep peacefully.

She felt those strong arms shackling her body and remembered that voice with its strange inflexion crying aloud in her ears, "I've got you . . ."

She certainly would be made to pay for all this.

And on this sunny morning, Sá-Virginia had enflamed her emotion by saying, "My dear, you're in love . . ."

She knew, of course, that the apprentices had been whispering about her, and even Miquelina had asked her on the previous evening as she was making purchases at her store, "Well, when's the wedding? . . ."

"I haven't decided on a husband . . ."

"And what about Eurico?"

Dona Josefa, always placid and easy-going, asked no

questions, but picked her out specially to mend and sew Eurico's shirts and socks. "These are Eurico's, my dear. . . . You look after his, and Sá-Virginia can take care of the others. . . ."

(The romance caused her no surprise. It wasn't the first time it had happened in her home. 'Dona Josefa had been present at many of the apprentices' weddings, and later became godmother to their children. . . .)

One night the two lovers were leaning against a steep slope, and Eurico took it into his head to talk to her with an unbelievable eloquence, using long, difficult words, such as only Henrique employed.

Why, not even Seu Liro could do better! She felt dizzy with emotion. How beautiful the distant lights of the city seemed! Her eyes became misty, and she felt as if she were floating. The cries of the children reached her faintly as if from another world.

Eurico's brown hand seized hers, hardened by the wash-tub and the stove. It was burning, and with a sudden movement she snatched her hand free from his grip.

"What do you think you're doing, Eurico? People might be looking. . . ."

That night she stroked the hand his hand had touched, and went to sleep with her face pressed on it.

43

"Won't you play a little for me, Ima, please?"

Aunt Thereza, who was Dona Josefa's sister, had a charming way of her own of asking. Imaculata did not wait to be asked twice. She opened the piano, and placing herself on the stool, she said:

"What shall I play, Aunt?"

"Anything you please. . . ."

Aunt Thereza could never remember the names of any



composers, but understood, as few did, the art that brought into being an architecture of sound in space.

As Imaculata's hands fell on the keyboard, she forgot Aunt Thereza, who was listening to her with closed eyes, sitting in an armchair in the sitting-room almost void of furniture.

Aunt Thereza, in spite of her sixty years, still kept her looks. Her husband had deserted her twenty years previously, leaving her with two young boys, whom she educated by her work as a dressmaker. One of them, Henrique, had died of galloping consumption many years ago, leaving behind him a reputation for saintliness. The other, still young, had gone to the war as a volunteer in the Italian army.

Aunt Thereza was like her sister, superstitious, always at her prayer-book and of an unbelievable purity of character. She professed herself scandalized on hearing that, in her sister's house, Gilberto amused himself by peeping through the keyhole at grown-ups taking a bath. Luiza once, feeling as she was beginning to undress that she was being watched by the little scoundrel, opened the door suddenly and found the boy leaning against it. "Don't you know that they don't do such things in Santa Rita de Cassia?" she asked severely, to which Gilberto replied, "I don't know much about your town, but it's certainly done in Rio. . . ."

Imaculata ran her hands tirelessly over the keyboard, and Aunt Thereza somehow felt more relieved in spirit and freed for the time from the dark shadows, full of suffering and oppression, which surrounded her. Imaculata's music followed no special theme, but seemed to express the dreams of all human beings, as if imagination itself had found a tongue.

Suddenly Miquelina appeared in the doorway that led to the garden. It was Thursday . . . her day for writing to Juco.

Gloria-Helena could not get to sleep the night before taking up her duties with Dona Chiquinha de Almeida. She felt somehow that she was preparing herself for a sacrifice. True, she would be earning those twenty milreis weekly, but the Lord only knew how.

Dona Josefa had tried to cheer her by saying : " With those extra twenty milreis, we can pay a lot of little bills."

The job was quite an event in the life of the family. Her brothers and sisters looked at her in a special way, and one of them said, " Let's hope you'll not be found strangled at the Old Owl's Nest." That was the name given in the neighbourhood to Dona Chiquinha's house.

On the hill all sorts of stories were told about it—how the dogs slept on soft spring-beds covered with priceless eiderdowns, and the cats snored on rare carpets ; how at times pandemonium was heard to break out in the old building, with dogs barking, cats mewling and Inacia yelling with pain from the terrible beatings given her by the old aristocrat. How again in days gone by Dona Chiquinha let one of her finger-nails grow two inches long, in the Chinese fashion, in order to scratch her hoary head. Now, however, they said she had replaced the nail by an ivory finger on a stick, especially imported from Portugal for that purpose. Before starting her first day's work, Gloria-Helena ran to the kitchen to say to Luiza, " Pray to the Drowned for me. . . ."

Dona Josefa made her put on her best dress with stripes, and a white starched neckband. Imaculata brushed her hair for her, which fell in plaits over her shoulders. Amparo dug out of one of the drawers a blue silk kerchief. All stopped work in order to see her off as she went through the grounds with her short steps. She met Gilberto at the gate :

" All fixed ? "

"All fixed," she replied.

Gloria-Helena promised to tell him the secrets which she might discover in the old "Owl's Nest."

It was two in the afternoon, and the sun was burning. Dona Chiquinha's gates were about a hundred yards away from those of Seu Chico.

Gloria-Helena felt herself going slower. "May Cousin Henrique give me strength," she murmured.

She pushed open the iron gate, in the centre of which a coat of arms was discernible. She crossed Dona Chiquinha's garden and clapped her hands. Dogs barked in reply, and an old woman, bent and withered, with a lorgnette held before her nose, received her with, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Dona Chiquinha. . . ."

"Oh, it's you; come in. . . ."

She entered and found herself in a dark entrance-hall, with rose-wood furniture and old images of saints in niches, the floor covered with white and blue tiles.

Dona Chiquinha placed Gloria-Helena on a stool alongside a high-backed armchair covered with dark red silk in which she herself sat.

She stared at the girl, and Gloria-Helena thought, as the old woman gazed at her, of the story of the witch who fattened little children in cages. The old woman had a suspicious air about her and didn't ask her visitor to read to her at all. She seemed kindly and simple, asking questions about her family's health and what her brothers and sisters were doing. She even enquired, "Is it true that Amparo intends to marry that Portuguese?"

Dona Chiquinha knew and discussed everything that went on in the neighbourhood and afterwards told Gloria-Helena very slowly the story of her own family, which boasted of a Duke, a Marquess and a whole army of Barons.

"So you see, my girl, that I come, thank God, from a very good stock, not like so many others, from convicts or Jews."

Gloria-Helena was not quite sure what the old lady, with

her blouse full of tucks and a lace jabot, was trying to tell her, and so she gave an almost audible sigh of relief when Inacia, with shaky arms, brought in a tray bearing coffee, sandwiches and toast.

The old negress had a shining skin as if she had rubbed herself with oil. She laughed, showing a flawless set of teeth.

"Good afternoon," she said, placing the tray on a table.

"He-he-he," she laughed.

"You may go," ordered Dona Chiquinha, but Inacia continued to laugh in a crazy manner.

"Get out," screamed the old lady, half in a rage.

With a "he-he-he," the former slave, dragging her slippers, disappeared with her strange grin.

"Old fool," murmured Dona Chiquinha. "I'll pay her out for this. . . ."

The threat fell ominously on the ears of the girl. What did she mean? Was it true, then, what they said in her street? Dona Chiquinha insisted she should take a salami sandwich with her coffee.

"You can eat it without fear. . . . It's guaranteed genuine. . . ."

Gloria stared at her amazed.

"I know," said the old lady, "most people don't like eating salami because they think it's minced child's flesh. . . ."

"Child's flesh?"

"What, don't you know, my girl, that there are gypsies in the State of Minas who steal children to make mince-meat of them?"

Gloria had never heard such a story; and Dona Chiquinha observed the horror reflected in her eyes.

"Don't be frightened. I'm talking of the State of Minas. Only the other day, a friend of mine was telling me about finding a child's finger in a sausage. . . ."

The old woman smiled. From the kitchen could be heard a long, sinister laugh. Dona Chiquinha rose and, going to the door leading to the kitchen passage, yelled,

"Stop that, Inacia. . . ." The command had a strange tone, and the negress remained silent.

Dona Chiquinha returned, sat down in the old armchair, and, drinking the remains of the coffee, said finally, "I'll show you my library. . . . It was left by my father, the late Viscount of Almeida, Counsellor of the Empire. . . ." She rose, and Gloria did likewise. Dona Chiquinha turned towards the corridor. "Follow me. . . ."

They walked down a vast corridor, passing several rooms crammed with pictures, marbles and carpets, and each with an immense cut-glass candelabra, tinkling in the breeze, till they reached the huge library, at the back of the house, which gave on to a verandah overlooking the bay. Gloria noticed that dogs wandered through the house, together with cats in a sordid promiscuity, soiling carpets and floors, which still retained a dim polish.

Gloria-Helena halted in amazement in the middle of the library. Never had she seen so many books in her life, not even in Dr. Moreira's house or in Zacarias' studio. . . .

For a moment she forgot the old woman who had told these horrible stories, and the sinister laughter of the old negress.

"How wonderful," she exclaimed, as she thought of the happiness it would give her brothers and sisters to be amongst these shelves overflowing with books of every kind and size.

"From to-day onwards," said Dona Chiquinha, in an affectionate tone, "these books are also yours. . . ."

"Thank you, Dona Chiquinha. . . ."

"You can read them all, but on one condition. . . ."

She stopped, and then went on as if committing an act of charity :

"You must read them here. . . . The hours for you to read to me, that is, your working hours, are between three and five . . . so if you want to read any of these books, you may come any other time outside those. . . ."

"You're very kind, Dona. . . ."

The old lady, with her affected air of a nobleman's daughter, then accompanied her to the tiled gateway.

"You can have the day off to-day. We'll start to-morrow, at three sharp."

"Till to-morrow then, Dona Chiquinha. . . ."

"Till to-morrow, my girl. . . ."

Smilingly, she closed the iron gates with their coat of arms displayed in the centre : a lion crushing a lamb, and underneath the motto in Latin.

Gloria departed, but on passing the huge walls which hid the back of the house, she heard a slow wailing, drowned by the barking of the dogs. It was probably Inacia being beaten by her mistress.

## 45

On opening the gate of her home, where Gilberto was anxiously waiting for her, Gloria was already prepared for the daily sacrifice. Had not her mother told her, "twenty milreis a week . . . enough to look after the little bills."

"Well, Gloria?"

Hardly had Gilberto spoken, when Lucio appeared back from school, carrying his leather satchel on his back.

"Hello Gloria, back already?"

"Lucio . . . I wish you could have seen . . ."

"Seen what?" asked Gilberto, unable to conceal his curiosity. Gloria no longer brought to mind Inacia or the pets soiling the costly carpets.

"I wish you could have seen the library. It was like something out of a novel."

On arrival at the workroom, they fell on her, asking questions. She kept on praising the library, however, the view from the verandah over the bay of Rio . . . How lovely it all had been and what an angel Dona Chiquinha was.

Gilberto was deeply disappointed, as he wanted all day to hear of mysteries.

"And as Dona Chiquinha has no children, she breeds dogs. . . ."

Before dinner, however, Gloria ran to the kitchen, where Luiza was arranging the plates.

"Well, my dear, how did you get on with the old hag?"

Gloria looked round fearing that someone might hear.

"What's up . . . what are you making those eyes for?" asked the mulatto, as she cleaned the knives.

Gloria put her finger to her lips as a sign not to talk too loud, and approaching the sink, piled up with plates and pans, she whispered, "Listen, Luiza . . . I'm frightened."

"Of what?"

"Not so loud, Luiza."

And more softly still, "I'm scared of Dona Chiquinha."

"But weren't you just saying she was an angel?"

"Yes, I did, Luiza . . . but that was to put them off. . . . I must help the family. . . ."

Luiza did not know how to reply.

"Please pray to the Drowned that Dona Chiquinha doesn't kill me to make mince-meat."

"What nonsense is this?"

"A story she was telling me. I've the impression she was preparing the ground. . . ."

"Are you mad?"

"Don't talk so loudly. Do please pray to the Drowned for me, Luiza. Don't you think it's awful to be made into salami?"

The mulatto laughed loudly.

46

That same night, Fioravanti made his appearance, followed by two street urchins, each one carrying a heavy parcel.

"What's up, Fioravanti? Moving?"

He was bringing along his entire collection of gramo-

phone records. He explained he was still mourning, and hadn't yet the heart to hear them.

He thought it would be better for Seu Chico to look after them.

Seu Chico quite understood Fioravanti's feelings and agreed to do so, and with his own hands placed the packets in a corner of his sitting-room.

47

As Jack and Lucio entered the classroom together next morning, they saw their own caricatures on the blackboard drawn in chalk, surrounded by phrases of a vague and apparently indecent nature.

Lucio's face reddened, as it was not the first time he had been the victim of his schoolmates' mischief. What was wrong in his friendship with Jack, who shared with him the same interests in books, pictures, theatres and cinemas?

Jack was furious, and going up to the board, before rubbing out the drawings, he cried: "If the worm who did these is a man, let him stand up or else let the class know he's nothing but a——"

And the insult rolled out in the silence of the classroom. No one moved.

Jack then seized the sponge and obliterated both drawings and words.

At that moment the Geography master entered the room.

On his return from school, Lucio could not forget what Jack had explained to him. He had, of course, seen the caricatures and read the words on the blackboard, but he had no idea of the extent of the insult.

Jack, in a few words, had opened his eyes to a world that Lucio had no notion of, nor had he seen it mentioned even in the most difficult books he had read.

"D'you mean to say you don't see how rotten those



beasts are ? ” asked Jack, and went on, “ Swine . . . that’s what I think of them. . . . Swine . . . ”

Suddenly in a rage, he blurted out : “ I’ve got an idea that it’s all Fabio’s doings. . . . Yes, I’m sure it’s him. . . . He’s hopeless. Only the other day on the playground he confessed he was madly in love with a boy in the fourth form.”

Lucio opened his eyes wide.

“ Fabio took pride in saying that at his boarding-school, at bedtime when the lights were out, this boy made no bones about going to bed with him. . . . ”

Lucio started sweating.

Jack went on, “ I’ve been waiting for something of the sort. . . . Those boys never forgive us for being close friends. They think we waste our time in a lot of rubbish, and can’t believe we read books in the library or go to the theatres or shows with Seu Chico. They imagine things. . . . I know, I’m convinced that Fabio was at the bottom of it all, with his theories that boys are more attractive than girls.”

Jack seemed changed as he spoke, taller, more manly, in his rage and knowledge of things that till then had passed unnoticed under the sickly eyes of Lucio. “ They’re a bad lot,” he said, and a gleam of contempt shone in his eyes.

## 48

• That night, Panizoni came as usual, to take Lucio to a theatre, the Republic, where he had a job in the chorus of a popular opera company.

Lucio watched the show with breathless interest, crouching behind the back-stage balcony.

On leaving the theatre, the heat was terrible.

Panizoni took his hand and crossed the Senado Street with him ; Lucio still had the smell of grease-paint in his nostrils, and his ears were full of the noise of the stage,

the sets being put up and taken down, the carpenters and electricians in blue dungarees, dirty and sweaty, and the actors and singers in their silk and plumes. . . .

Panizoni seemed full of life, struck his enormous chest with his fists and gave out strident notes. "O . . . o o o . . . ooooo."

Passers-by stopped to look at him. "Well, Lucio, how did you enjoy 'Carmen'?"

The baritone was expecting his appreciation, but during the whole spectacle Lucio had been unable to get out of his head Jack's revelations about Fabio's and his other schoolmates' love-affairs.

He blurted out the sad tale to Panizoni, who at first became furious: "What were the priests doing," he asked, "who were deaf to such talk and blind to these disgusting goings-on?"

He eventually became calmer, and they walked down the Mem-de-Sá Avenue, at that hour full of women with enticing figures leaning in the shadows against the doorways, plying their trade. Others came and went along the pavement with jerky steps and hips swaying. From the brightly lit upper stories, gay voices could be heard and the sound of gramophones pouring out the latest Carnival dance music.

Panizoni, in view of the curiosity evinced by his little friend, thought it opportune to enlighten him about certain aspects of life.

At first his explanations were confused, as if the words were hard to pronounce and too long. Lucio listened attentively, and Panizoni finished with, "Don't forget, however, Lucio. Never despise a man or woman for being attracted by their own sex. Everyone is as he is born, or is made, or just becomes."

He became silent and the two companions found they had reached the Paula Mattos hillside.

On his return from the theatre, Lucio turned the handle of his bedroom door and found Henrique in bed reading, who immediately started asking questions as to how he had enjoyed "Carmen," whether he preferred it to "Cavalleria Rusticana" or "Tosca," and what he thought of the singers. "Were they good?"

Lucio replied absent-mindedly, his head in a turmoil with Panizoni's theories.

"What's wrong?" asked his elder brother, sitting up in bed, and looking at him. "Nothing."

Henrique pretended to take up his uninterrupted reading.

Lucio went behind the bed and started undressing and putting on his night-shirt. (It was considered a mortal sin for one to undress before others.)

"Shall I put out the light?" asked Henrique.

"No. Go on reading."

In the next bed, Gilberto was snoring, and a little farther off, in his cradle, Helio was curled up asleep.

Henrique rose, and sat down on the edge of his brother's bed, saying, "You're very strange to-night. . . . What's up, poet?"

Lucio, for the first time, felt fear. . . . Fear of what? What harm was there in his elder brother coming to talk to him?

Perhaps, though, his brother was like Fabio. His head started to ache. . . . Henrique persisted in trying to find out why Lucio was so sad and low. Should he call their father? Didn't he feel well? Perhaps they should call Sá-Virginia, or else Luiza. . . . His suggestions were endless.

"No, Henrique, I'm all right. . . ."

"Good."

Henrique then told him: "D'you know, Lucio, I'm in love. . . ." And in a lower tone, "I'm mad about somebody."

Lucio, who had already gone to bed, opened his eyes, very surprised. Henrique made a quick move to the chair on which his clothes were folded, and took out a small photograph. Placing it in the palm of his hand he said, "Look, Lucio. . . ."

Lucio stared. It was the portrait of a woman, with enormous eyes and a cat's-fur boa around her neck.

"Well, what do you think of her? Pretty, eh? . . ."

"Is—is—is this your——" stuttered Lucio in a half-strangled voice.

"Yes, she is. . . . Not bad, is she?"

"No, she's lovely," replied Lucio, without conviction.

Henrique looked pleased at Lucio's praise, and in order to flatter his brother, said, "Will you promise me something? You know I write quite well, but I've no gift for verse. Will you write a love poem for me, for my girl, just as if she were yours? . . . Will you?"

Lucio came out with, "So you mean to marry her?"

His brother was greatly amused.

"Marry? Are you mad? This girl here . . ." pointing to the photograph. "Do you know what a tart is?"

Lucio thought he did roughly. Tarts were those women he saw in the Tobias Barreto and Nuncio Streets. Half naked, exhibiting their thighs and arms, highly painted, and calling from their little houses to passers-by, "Come in, dearie." All looked like foreigners, with their hair usually cut short like a man's, like the girl in the picture. Henrique, however, went on: "At first I paid her five milreis every time I called. After a bit she started to fancy me. Now I don't pay any more, and I've fixed an hour for calling."

"What do you mean, Henrique?"

"Why, don't you know, Lucio?" and then he added in a contemptuous tone, "I can't see why you read so much. . . . Don't you know that men . . .?"

Lucio had an impulse to make him stop.

"Now, see here, Lucio . . ." continued his brother, "when a man reaches a certain age he must have a woman. . . . It's good for his health. . . . The best thing, of course, is to marry right away; but that isn't so easy, so the only way left is to go with a tart. Do you understand now?"

"I say, Henrique, does Father know?"

"Know what?"

Lucio became embarrassed: "Does he know you go after women, go to their . . .?"

He could not get himself to finish the sentence. Henrique laughed heartily. He looked different and taller, in his striped pyjamas.

"And if Father got to hear?"

Leaning over the bed, Henrique went on, "Father knows it. . . ."

He started telling his brother what he knew of such matters. Eurico had asked him months ago to go out with him and had made certain insinuations. He thought he ought to get to know women better, and go with him to the houses of some women he knew. Eurico then went further. If Henrique liked, he would even lend him money to make such visits possible. Henrique, however, had declined on the ground that he couldn't take money from someone who earned so little. Eurico had then come out with the story. That money was not his but Seu Chico's, who had entrusted him with the job of taking his son to the brothels, because without an experience of these, a boy was not really a man at all. Lucio could not bring himself to believe what he heard.

"All fathers do the same, Lucio. What's the surprise?"

Henrique told him of his visits to such women . . . generally on Saturdays. One of these was the woman in the portrait, who had taken a fancy to him. He no longer paid her, but gave her presents. That catskin boa was his . . . it had cost him a hundred milreis, in Abel's store, which he had paid for at ten milreis a month. He hoped

to pay this gift off quickly, with the money earned by book-keeping for Lucas and for Homero, the butcher.

Then changing the subject he said, "D'you know, I've arranged to teach at the school in Orient Street. A class of forty little boys . . . a hundred and fifty milreis a month. . . . Quite a fortune, eh? Father was against it, and so was Imaculata. But I held out and I'm starting next week."

Lucio was speechless. His head was in a whirl.

"Sleepy?" asked Henrique, and stroking his head, added, "Good night, poet. . . ."

With these words, he turned out the light and jumped into bed. In a few minutes he was snoring and doubtless dreaming of the woman with bobbed hair, wearing the catskin fur he had given her.

50

Lucio could not get to sleep. He felt like crying, and soon his stifled sobs could be heard from the bolster. Not because there were men who only liked men, and women who only cared for their own sex, as Fabio, Jack and Panizoni had told him. He did not weep because women sold themselves for a catskin fur purchased by a boy of fifteen like Henrique.

He cried even more bitterly because Seu Chico, whom he had almost considered a paragon, with his motto, "The only really beautiful thing on earth is love . . ." thought it right for his son to buy this love with a miserable five-milreis note. He could not understand how his father, who worshipped beauty, who was so high-minded that he taught him to regard with sympathy the unfortunate and to try to discover the beauty in life, in poems, or even in the movement of an actor's hands, could sink so low. To him his act in asking Eurico to take his son to those streets lined with brothels was like throwing the latter to the slaver jaws of Fioravanti's mad dog. Lucio shook. He

felt it necessary to cleanse and purify the souls of his father and of Henrique, as the Public Health Department disinfected the corner of the street where the mad dog of Fioravanti had lain foaming and twitching in its death-pangs. His father and brother and Eurico appeared to him more sinister than the dog, and brought to mind Marcolina, who had been so lovely and so good, and who was now, according to the apprentices' gossip, a tart. No, no, it couldn't be. How had Seu Chico the nerve? How, after bringing up and teaching Henrique and setting him a good example, encouraging him and making him study science and literature, could he want him to imitate sailors and soldiers, dirty and drunk, by purchasing love in a dark by-street where women were exhibiting their immense thighs and breasts?" No . . . It just was not possible. Before his eyes passed the boys of his boarding-school, all looking exactly like Henrique and Fabio, laughing and grinning with the same kind of teeth, and furtively, like thieves, creeping into the beds of younger boys.

At last he awoke the house with his despairing cries. The whole night through he babbled unintelligibly. A doctor was called, and once again they made his arms ache with injections.

As morning broke he was still unconscious.

51

For three days Lucio had grown steadily worse. The doctor advised sending the rest of the children away, so Seu Chico sent them in a taxi to Aunt Thereza's house in Todos os Santos.

In order to accompany the others, Gloria-Helena had succeeded in obtaining several days' leave from Dona Chiquinha, although it upset her to make this request at the beginning of her employment. The old aristocrat, when informed of the reason, made no objections. She

even went further and offered to assist Seu Chico in anything he required.

Only the older children remained at home.

Luiza was busy praying to the Drowned, and Henrique had completely forgotten about the woman with the catskin fur. Amparo, in her turn, had made a vow to crawl on her knees the three hundred and fifty-five steps of the Penha church, should her saint save her brother. She went as far as to vow not to care any longer for Joaquim. Imaculata, who now worked harder than ever to earn money for the added expenses of chemists' and doctors' bills, was always popping in to have a look at the patient and ready to help nurse him.

Poor Lucio, with an ice-bag on his head, tossed about constantly, and Seu Chico had not slept for three nights, refusing to leave his side.

Panizoni, however, was the one who was most upset. As soon as he knew of Lucio's illness, the baritone followed one road only from the theatre to the house at Paula Mattos and back. He even gave up drinking. His body became inured to endless and monotonous rehearsals during the day, and to sleepless nights.

When he left Seu Chico's house to return to his work, his parting words to the family were injunctions not to forget the pills every two hours, to call a doctor if Lucio got worse, and, above all, not to make a noise.

He made so many suggestions that one would have thought he was Lucio's father, rather than Seu Chico.

Six days and nights had now passed and Lucio's condition remained unchanged. He recognized no one in his room, nor did their voices seem to stimulate him.

Jack, at school, spread the news of Lucio's illness.

"His head sways from one side to another like a pen-



dulum," he said, but nobody cared or listened except D. João Baptista, who was deaf. He had the job of looking after the flower-beds in the cloisters and the altar linen, which he washed with his deft hands with the water from the sculptured marble fountains in the sacristy of the Abbey.

D. João Baptista did not seem to touch the ground as he walked, and when he appeared anywhere it was always silently, like the flowers he cared for. Like all deaf people he spoke in a low voice as if not wishing to hurt his own and others' hearing.

It was D. João Baptista who founded, in the sacristy, a special library, almost entirely of religious books, for the benefit of those boys who had distinguished themselves in class. Lucio had been an assiduous frequenter of it. Every morning he invariably arrived half an hour early at school and, instead of spending his time playing ball or marbles in the yard, or listening to the latest gossip in which figured nude women and men anxious to increase the population of the world, he made his way to the Church, which he crossed on tiptoe as if he was afraid of disturbing the incense-scented silence of the great nave, dimly lit by the flickering light of silver candelabra. He directed his steps towards the sacristy, opening and closing behind him the heavy rosewood door, which exhibited the long and patient work of an anonymous wood-carver.

D. João Baptista looked forward every morning to receiving Lucio's call and entered into conversation with him, although perhaps the priest did not always understand what he was saying. Not that it mattered, for Lucio was always ready to help him arrange the hundreds of volumes of "São Tarcisio's Library." D. João Baptista had discovered every kind of book outside the convent that might interest growing youths: books on travel, voyages and discoveries; strange stories of pathfinders and adventurers, pirates and famous men. For the most part, however, the library consisted of pious works on religion and on the lives of martyrs and saints of the Church. In addition there was a collection

of small typewritten books by Brazilian, Portuguese and famous foreign poets.

D. João Baptista loved poetry. (After all, had not his work of tending flowers in the cloisters and washing the Abbey's altar linen something in keeping with it?) But poetry that dealt with subjects other than the temptations of the flesh and praise of sin took time and patience in finding. From what he had read over so many years of his life he chose what seemed the most appropriate, copying from hundreds of books those poems that extolled nature, filial sentiments and heroic episodes—short poems and well-known sonnets—collecting these with the same avidity as a jeweller collects precious stones, or his hands the flowers that grew in the shade of the Cloisters. After which, with the help of other priests and friars, he would type all this material on paper which gave out a faint aroma of incense. At night, in his tiny cell, armed with scissors, needles, thread, awls and an apparatus for engraving the strangest devices on leather, he would bind all these typewritten pages together, dividing the poets into their respective centuries and grouping them according to his own artistic taste. When João Baptista was informed of Lucio's illness, he abandoned for a few hours—a rare thing for him to do—the Cloister flowers, the altar linen and the books of "São Tarcisio's Library," and went to see the sick child.

Without a word he remained for a considerable time by Lucio's bedside, with lowered eyes, and only Dona Josefa noticed the friar's lips moving as if in prayer.

## 53

All that night, Lucio, whose fever had abated somewhat, seemed to be getting more delirious.

"Panizoni! Panizoni!" he exclaimed, looking around as if trying to find the baritone's ruddy features.

"Panizoni! Panizoni!"

Henrique tore out of the house and through the grounds and only came to a stop on Senado Hill, at the corner of Riachuelo Street where he hailed the first taxi he saw.

"Republica Theatre," he called.

"Aida" was being given.

Panizoni had just left the stage when the door-keeper informed him that someone with an urgent message wished to speak to him.

On observing Henrique he sensed trouble.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing out of the way. Lucio is calling for you. I came in a taxi to call you."

Panizoni quite forgot that he had to appear in the chorus in the last act.

"Did you tell the taxi to wait?"

"Yes."

"Let's go, then."

And he made his way towards the street, pushing like a madman through the stage hands, carpenters and electricians, dressed as he was in the costume of an ancient Egyptian, covered in shining chain-armour with a silver helmet on his head. He entered the taxi at Henrique's side without asking further questions.

That night was one of the worst, and when dawn came, it found Lucio asleep, with a touch of fever and breathing with difficulty. Around him, asleep as well, their first sound sleep after ten long and anxious days, were his parents, Henrique, Imaculata, Gloria-Helena, Luiza and the old blackie. Seated on a chair still clad as an Egyptian warrior, his face made up for the stage, Panizoni prayed.

*The Swallow*, so anxiously expected, appeared that week, typewritten on foolscap paper.

Gloria-Helena had designed the title in coloured pencil,

and also the sub-titles, and had drawn the caricatures as well. At the top of the first page appeared in large letters, "Director : Lucio Marianni," followed by the names of Eurico and of the other apprentices as contributors, in an attempt to imitate *The Cricket*, a very important weekly, several numbers of which had been given to them by Lulu, or sneaked from barbers' saloons.

The contents were varied. There were leading articles on political matters, edited by Henrique, who had a real Brazilian talent for running down the Government, the President of the Republic and his ministers, whom he attacked as a gang of thieves and scoundrels. These politics were followed by poetry from Lucio's pen, and articles by Gloria-Helena, copied with great care from her school-book and corrected by Seu Liro.

And so *The Swallow* was founded as a Saturday publication, the issue consisting of one sole copy, typewritten with care and without corrections.

The first issue was a great success, and was read with great interest, as it passed from hand to hand.

Lucio, on his way to recovery, watched over all the details with scrupulous attention, and Seu Chico contributed by making over, as *The Swallow's* Editorial offices, an old empty shack that stood in the grounds, consisting of two rooms in which the dogs and a goat slept.

Seu Chico had fitted up these quarters with some old bits of furniture which he had taken from the basement of his 'house. It was he himself who nailed a wooden tablet on the door with the words *The Swallow*, "Editor's Office," written by Henrique's neat hand. On the wall of the larger of the two rooms hung a notice saying "Press," and just below it the typewriter was installed on an old table. A further half-dozen chairs were strewn around, and three or four little tables. An old desk bore the word "Director" on its back.

During Lucio's recovery and after, the offices became the children's place of meeting before school, before dinner, and in fact at any spare moment. Thus the paper which Seu Chico had founded by purchasing a typewriter became something extraordinary and wonderful in the eyes of these children, who lost nothing of the simplicity of youth as a result of their intimacy with theatres, cinemas, concerts, exhibitions and grown-up people.

Sometimes when Seu Chico called his children, Luiza used to reply: "They're in the Editor's office."

Amparo helped to decorate the rooms, making curtains from old pieces of cotton cloth for the windows, and, with her slim hands, wove straw mats to cover the decayed floor, which was full of holes.

Even Zacarias brought in one of his water-colours for the Director's room.

## 55

With the rent two months overdue—for which first the purchase of the typewriter and then Lucio's illness was responsible—Seu Chico received an intimation from his landlord giving him forty-eight hours within which to settle his debt. Where could he possibly find, in so short a time, six hundred milreis?

This time the frown that usually appeared on his forehead when worried by financial problems was absent, and Seu Chico dissimulated his nervousness.

The possibility of an eviction terrified him, nevertheless.

These were a common occurrence on the Hill, and tenants had a habit of pretending to be ill on the approach of the bailiffs in order to delay the contents of their houses being forcibly moved into the street.

There was only one solution possible, thought Seu Chico, and that was to pawn the collection of gramophone records which Fioravanti had confided to his charge while he was in mourning. The old shoemaker need never know of this,

or anyone else for that matter. At the first opportunity, perhaps within a fortnight, Seu Chico would have his records back.

He therefore made two large parcels of the collection which the Hill knew so well, and with the aid of one of his apprentices, carried them down to the pawnbroker.

56

For nearly seven weeks Lucio had not attended school, and spent his time at home scribbling page after page. Poems seemed to pour without effort from his pen, as if he were thinking to music. He started reading with greater relish the poetry books on Seu Chico's bookshelves, imitating their style or dissecting their construction, and attempting to discover the secret of their rhythm, which somehow appeared so different from his childish efforts.

While he lay on the grass—the doctor had ordered him a great deal of outdoor life, walks and rest in sunshine—his one wish was to be like these great minds, and he dreamt of having, when he died (the idea of death never left him), his bust in bronze erected in one of the public parks. Perhaps even a statue. He became resigned to his illness as something necessary for his inspiration. Had he not read in one of the books that, without suffering, immortality could not be attained? He made a point of becoming an immortal, and revealed his dream to Gilberto.

"So you want to have a statue of yourself put up after you're dead?" enquired his brother very seriously.

"That's right!"

Gilberto crossed his arms over his chest like Napoleon, whose likeness hung in a frame in the Editor's office.

"Haven't you ever thought what a position you would be in?"

"What d'you mean?"

"Well, if they put up a statue of you sitting," continued Gilberto, frowning heavily, "they'll be saying that you're

cleaning shoes . . . and if they show you standing . . . it's a pity . . ."

"Why?"

"No, Lucio, you're much too ill . . . you couldn't stand upright all that time, till the end of the world. You couldn't really!"

57

The first issue of *The Swallow* touched Zacarias most of all. Covering the whole of the first page was the painter's portrait, cut out of a magazine in which it had appeared, with the title of "Glory to a great artist." In this he could trace the hand of Lucio, who had written the words, but in the background, he felt that someone else had proposed this homage to him. It had been, in fact, Imaculata who had said: "Why not include in our magazine a gallery of celebrities such as the *Epoca* publishes on Sundays?"

The suggestion was received with enthusiasm by the director and the other editors of their great paper.

And the first page was henceforth reserved for the celebrity chosen and contained his biography, portrait and the editors' homage. Before any of the others could think of a name, Imaculata had blushing and hurriedly come out with: "Why not begin with Zacarias?"

Amparo, who was present, seemed to guess the reason for her blushes.

"Good idea," called out Gloria-Helena.

They could equally well have started with Panizoni, or with Lulu, if the object was to write up their friends. Besides, Zacarias was in no need of this praise. The newspapers had recently been devoting considerable space to his art, calling him a master of colour and a magician of the brush. Poor Panizoni, mostly drunk, in spite of the voice that the gods had given him, vegetated forgotten in the midst of the hundred other chorus singers of the cheap opera company in the Republica Theatre. Lulu's destiny

was as sad as the drunken baritone's. Seu Chico continued to declare that Lulu had talent, which was to a great extent true. As he played he was transformed. Mr. Nobody suddenly became King, and he who was so ugly became almost handsome. But Lulu was at heart a strange creature, and always spoke in an inaudible voice as if his only mode of expression lay in his playing.

Fioravanti, who understood music, used to repeat, "Lulu ought to have his playing recorded." All in vain, however. Lulu continued in the districts he lived in night after night, playing in night-clubs and private houses, cheap music for others to dance to. . . . How sore his fingers must have become, playing endless polkas, waltzes and schottisches. He felt within him that he was born to interpret great works before vast enthusiastic audiences ; but this dream, like all his other dreams, had never come true. However, the places where he played were full of couples, dancing to his music.

Fioravanti, who liked him, kept on saying, "Why the devil don't you send these night-clubs to blazes?" at which Lulu used to smile, without answering. What was the use? It was too late now—he would be thirty-eight in December—to start again as a player of classical music, wearing a stiff collar, a wild crop of hair, and only playing music of Brazilian or foreign masters, old and new. . . .

"I play the piano as others make shoes," he replied to Fioravanti. "The music I play has the same value as your work, Fioravanti . . . it comes in handy to stop one's hunger. . . ."

This was a lie, of course, but he never complained. . At the time when Imaculata suggested the painter for the first of their gallery of great men, Lucio had remembered the pianist but did not have the courage to propose him. His brothers and sisters would not have considered Lulu sufficiently important . . . his name had never appeared in the papers. Furthermore, Imaculata would not have accepted him. Once when she wished to study



the piano, she asked Lulu to teach her and he had refused, telling her he did not know how. He disliked taking pupils, even in the case of Imaculata, whom he had known from birth. He had a fear of influencing them, of teaching them his method of playing, which he considered a bad one, full of mistakes and harmful. Imaculata had accepted his excuses, but from that day she never referred to Lulu with the enthusiasm shown by her father or Fioravanti.

"He plays well . . . but really only dance music."

The first number of *The Swallow* also published on the last page a drawing which Lucio had prevailed on Zacarias to contribute. It was called "Two hands on a key-board," with the sub-title of "A brother of Beethoven." Lulu required no adjectives. Gloria-Helena had suggested as an allegory, a drawing of the Goddess of Music, a wreath in hand, but Sá-Virginia had intervened with :

"If you want to express your praise of Lulu, just draw a pair of hands."

The old blackie had been right. Gloria-Helena had asked Professor Liro's opinion on the matter. The Professor always knew everything, and he agreed with Sá-Virginia, adding, "Draw his hands on a keyboard." When Zacarias heard of the scheme, and noticed how Lucio was improving from day to day, immersed in his publishing activities, he felt he would like to give him a treat, and agreed to make the drawing as a tribute to the pianist.

## 58

Lulu appeared for dinner, and stayed until nine, when he took a hasty departure in order to play at the "Patriotico" Club, in Invalidos Street. What a monotonous life he led !

He was shown the first issue of *The Swallow*, and his long fingers shook as he held the magazine.

"What an idea !" he murmured, when he saw the drawing.

He became embarrassed, and the children saw how moved he was. He looked round him at the table, where all the family and the apprentices were eating in silence, watching him with friendly eyes, and at last came out with, "Thanks . . . thank you all very much."

He continued to turn over the pages of the review and, before putting it aside, he once again looked at the page dedicated to himself as if he wished to engrave it on his mind.

Seu Chico, as usual, was the life of the party. The talk turned on the war, and all agreed that Germany would lose . . . impossible for her not to. She was not merely fighting against half a dozen nations, but against liberty, which is part of every man's desires. Lulu had little to say. His mind was no doubt filled with images to which he could only give expression in music.

Henrique on his part brought up a topic that was causing anxiety to all, namely, the lack of news about Brazilian ships. How many had gone to the bottom?

As the war seemed to be in everyone's mind, Lulu asked for news about Aunt Thereza, whom the war was affecting most nearly.

"I saw her this afternoon by the docks."

"Where?" asked Dona Josefa, greatly surprised.

"By the docks, near Warehouse Number Eleven."

"Are you sure it was her?" Imaculata asked, in doubt.

There was a silence. What could Aunt Thereza be doing by the docks at noon in the broiling heat?

Dona Josefa explained: "She has an acquaintance in those parts."

But they knew she was lying. Luiza knew the secret of Aunt Thereza's strange behaviour. She was carrying out her vow to the "Drowned." Luiza had told her: "Stroll near the sea for two hours, praying low, and the sea will return your son. The Drowned will undertake the miracle."

Dinner was almost over when Miquelina appeared at the door that led to the garden, more sad and more depressed than usual.

"Good evening everybody," she said.

"Come in Miquelina ; come in."

Seu Chico enquired, "Have you already dined ? If not, come and sit down."

She seemed intensely upset. Imaculata noticed she kept on wringing her hands, and her face was furrowed with suffering. Her eyes shone suspiciously, as if she had been crying. Imaculata asked her if she had received a letter from Juco.

Miquelina nodded, without speaking.

"Sit down, Miquelina . . ."

She obeyed and remained motionless, without a word, waiting for the others to finish dinner. Coffee was being served.

Henrique got up. He had to leave in a hurry as a friend had invited him to see Italia Fausta in "Ré Misteriosa."

"I'll come with you," said the pianist and, rising, apologized for having to leave so soon.

"Good-bye, then," said Dona Josefa. "Don't be so long in appearing next time."

Lulu turned to her whom he called Mother, like one of the family and the employees, and kissed her podgy, rough hand. Lucio and Gloria-Helena like the rest, who left the table making a great noise with their chairs and plates, went up to the pianist.

"When will you play something for us ?"

Lulu, looking at Imaculata, said :

"Why should I ? Haven't you already a pianist at home ?"

Seu Chico led him to the terrace, and, on leaving, Lulu said to him in a low voice : "Chico, I have always looked on your family as mine. . . ."

At that moment, he suddenly recollected that even Dona

Josefa, anxious to make a great musician of him, had suggested his coming to live in her house, where he would always find a bed, a piano and food.

Lulu continued : "Chico, your children gave me to-day one of the few happy moments of my life. I mean *The Swallow* . . ."

And dropping his voice lower, as if ashamed at admitting it, he said : "Look, Chico . . . in spite of my talents, I never had my name in the papers."

And in his eyes shone a gleam of one who had once upon a time believed in glory. . . .

59

On finding herself at last alone with Dona Josefa, Miquelina opened her heart.

"A great misfortune, my friend. A terrible thing has happened." Imaculata entered at that moment and enquired : "Can I stay?" "Do, do," murmured the old grocery woman.

"What has happened, though?" asked Dona Josefa, greatly worried. Miquelina, with tears in her eyes and with shaking hands, took a letter from her bag.

"It's from Juco. . . ."

And in haste, as if the news terrified her :

"He'll be finishing school at the end of November. He'll be here before Christmas. . . ."

Dona Josefa and her daughter did not know how to reply, but both had the same thought in their minds.

"He'll be coming back. . . . What in Heaven's name am I to tell him? He'll find out everything. . . ."

Dona Josefa took one of her hands.

"Keep calm, my dear, keep calm."

"He'll find it all out—everything—how I lied . . . his sister's shame . . ."

She stared at them fixedly. "D'you think he'll forgive me, do you?"

She started crying softly, and Imaculata felt a heavy weight on her heart as if she were somehow to blame for Marcolina running off with a chauffeur.

60

The picture was nearing completion, and even Seu Chico was getting impatient.

“Do you ever propose finishing this work of yours?”

Zacarias excused himself. It was not really his fault but his model's. During Lucio's illness, which had lasted for two months, Amparo had not appeared at the studio. Dona Josefa was not altogether happy about her daughter's visits there. Not that she suspected Zacarias, whom she knew to be trustworthy. The trouble was Joaquim. Seu Chico had no further suspicions in that respect. Since he had caught Amparo with him and had beaten her so heartlessly, he felt sure that the affair was over and done with.

The romance had, however, continued to flourish, and Gloria-Helena, Gilberto and Lucio were in the secret, doing what they could to help their sister, and not letting out a word about Joaquim's presence when, on taking a walk, he would suddenly appear. Luiza complained. “This business of posing will end badly, as Joaquim accompanies Amparo every time she goes to the studio. . . .”

Dona Josefa was terrified, and it was on this account that she uttered a sigh of relief when her daughter one day told her: “To-day is the last time I'm posing.” She saw her off that day, smarter than ever, in an organdie dress made by the old darky, which made her look taller and lighter.

Gilberto accompanied her.

What was Amparo's astonishment on arriving at the studio to find Zacarias without his white smock which he wore at his work.

“What's this,” she enquired. “No painting to-day?”

He pointed to the finished picture which he had already signed. "I finished it last night. I couldn't get to sleep, so I worked instead. . . ." And suddenly, turning to Gilberto, he said to him :

"Would you mind going out and buying me to-day's morning paper?"

Gilberto at first felt like refusing. His mother had always told him : "Look after your sister, and never leave her alone."

But, really, she could only have meant this regarding Joaquim. So out he went.

The two remained alone. The studio was filled with the perfume of flowers from the red roses Zacarias had placed in the vases.

"Are you going to give a party here?" asked Amparo, pointing to the flowers and inwardly regretting having come and being thus left alone.

The artist replied, in a natural tone, "All this is in your honour, Amparo."

"In mine?"

Amparo began to be frightened. Zacarias continued : "Are you quite blind? Haven't you realized that I care a great deal for you?"

He paused. Amparo did not know what to say. She walked to the wide-open window through which the sun was streaming, while Zacarias continued his protestations. (How could a man of his age talk such nonsense?) She said nothing for a while, and then :

"Look here, Zacarias, you must forgive me, but you know how I care for Joaquim." She stared out of the window on to the lovely garden where the creepers were gilding the tree-tops, preferring not to look towards him.

She felt Zacarias seize her in his strong arms and heard him say : "Do you really care for Joaquim? Madly?" She turned and tried to free herself. It was too late. She

felt herself in his tight grip, her breasts against his powerful chest.

"Do you care all that much for Joaquim?" Zacarias insisted. There was a strange undertone in his panting voice.

She attempted to push him away, but the painter seemed to have lost his senses. "Really, do you?" he kept on.

"Of course I do . . . let me go. . . ."

"Amparo, listen . . ."

"I'll scream . . ."

He seemed not to hear.

"I'll tell Father . . ."

(Not a sign of Gilberto. Heavens, may the Drowned help and protect me!)

"I'll only let you go if you'll give me a kiss," replied Zacarias, his voice more passionate and his eyes greener.

"No, I won't. . . ."

"Come on. . . ."

"No, never. . . ."

In reply, he pressed her closer and kissed her on the mouth. He seemed insane with desire. Amparo, who had managed to free an arm, hit him across the face. "You swine . . . what do you take me for?—I'm going straight to tell Father. . . ."

She trembled, and Zacarias stared at her, dizzy as if drunk. "Forgive me, Amparo."

The garden gate closed with a crash. It was Gilberto returning.

"Please forgive me . . ." he repeated, attempting to straighten his dishevelled hair in front of the mirror. "Don't say anything to your father. . . . Try to understand . . . I went mad."

Amparo saw the reflection of his green, clouded eyes in the mirror. She noticed the heap of letters from the unknown woman on the chest of drawers. Supposing Imaculata was the correspondent? She felt almost sure it was she. How she would suffer if she heard of this

episode. Never again would Seu Chico allow the painter to come to his house. No . . . Imaculata, angel that she was, must not be made to suffer this disillusion. More tears could not heal those sorely pricked hands that had written those letters. With her eyes on the chest of drawers, on which the letters were heaped one on another, like fingers in agony, Amparo answered: "I promise not to say a word."

Gilberto, as he entered with a newspaper in his hand, saw her smiling reflection in the mirror.

61

Aunt Thereza appeared, carrying her black jet bag.

"Well, any news?"

She smiled a smile that went well with her black dress, and opened her bag.

From its depth, where she always kept her rosary, her missal book and a small bag of silver coins, she drew her son's letter.

"I received it to-day. . . . He's very well, very well indeed."

She seemed happy, and wandered from one end of her sister's house to another, repeating the news she had received. Her far-away son was a hero, an extraordinary boy. (She always called him a boy. . . .) And what a son! The very best in the world, and one who never forgot her. . . . He wrote every week . . . his only love on earth was his mother. God be praised. . . .

She stayed to dinner, something she rarely did, as she disliked arriving late at the distant suburban station, so appropriately called "All Saints."

While waiting for dinner, Imaculata played a few pieces, and Aunt Thereza joined her at the piano.

Imaculata was playing a somewhat sad theme, the sound of many confused voices in anguish.



She stopped and Aunt Thereza wept.

"What's the matter, Auntie? . . . What is it?"

With this, her aunt broke down. She had come to the Hill to deceive them. She had been lying the whole afternoon . . . one lie after another. She had not in fact had a word from her boy for over three months. During all this time she had fooled herself with the letter she had been carrying in her bag . . . an old letter, months old—poor Aunt Thereza—which she had read to her relations, friends and acquaintances, changing the contents in an attempt to deceive them and herself as well. What had happened to him?

And now, hearing the sad music had brought back everything, and she was ashamed at having lied and deceived all her friends.

62

Next morning at ten, Imaculata, instead of going to her piano lessons, decided to go to Tobias Barreto Street. She blushed with shame as she walked with eyes lowered along the street, which was almost deserted at that hour of the morning. At one or two half-open doors, however, stood half-naked women with paper flowers or silk bows in their hair.

Imaculata stopped before number forty-eight.

Nervously, she pushed open the iron gate, painted silver, and entered. It was the first time she had been there, and, with her heart beating fast, she started to climb the twenty odd steps of the stairway, covered with red drugget.

She stopped at almost the last step, looking around in desperation. Half-a-dozen doors, hung with cotton curtains, gave on to the hall. She noticed a spittoon and some earthenware pots containing palms standing on cheap wooden pedestals. Two chairs completed the furniture of the vestibule.

Imaculata clapped her hands. From the end of the

corridor appeared suddenly a large, corpulent and thick-lipped Portuguese woman.

"What's up?"

"Is Marcolina in?" enquired Imaculata in a whisper.

Without replying, the woman called out: "Marcolina . . . Marcolina . . . a caller for you." And, in a sarcastic tone, which set Imaculata's face aflame, added, "Only some female."

Imaculata lowered her eyes. Her limbs felt icy, as if she were about to faint. A moment passed, and suddenly Marcolina appeared, fresh from her bath, with her wet bath-gown clinging to her body and her hair hanging down on her shoulders. On recognizing her old friend, she opened her arms, astonished.

"Imaculata! No, no, of course, it can't be . . ."

It was three years since she had last seen her. The two girls stood there in a long embrace, and Marcolina could not restrain her pleasure: "God, what a surprise . . . what joy. . . . Ima, Ima, how pretty you are. . . ."

She kissed her face, her hair, and then led her to her small room furnished with a bed, a chair, a wardrobe, a huge mirror and an engraving of Our Lady of Sorrows hanging on the wall.

They sat down on the side of the bed, their hands clasped in each other's.

Marcolina could not contain herself. She asked endless questions. How was everyone at home, her godparents, the Hill? But noticing Imaculata's sad looks she became anxious.

"What is it, Ima? Has something happened to Mother. Has it? Tell me quick."

"No, nothing . . . she's very well. . . ."

"What, then?" she asked with a sigh, and looking straight at her friend, added: "Tell me, Ima darling, why you came to see me."

"I came . . ." But Imaculata was not allowed to finish.

"Has something happened to Juco?"

"It was on his account that I came. He's very well, though." There was a sudden silence and then Imaculata went on:

"Juco's term ends in November . . . about Christmas-time he'll be back. He thinks you'll be waiting for him at the store. . . ."

The words hurt her.

"Your mother never told him a word about you. Every week . . . remember how my handwriting looks like yours. . . . I have written a letter to Juco as if coming from you."

She stopped breathlessly.

"As I said, he'll be back by Christmas. Your poor mother, Marcolina, she's so sad, so worn out . . . it's painful to see . . . and she doesn't know what she can tell Juco. . . ."

She let go her friend's hand and her shoulders drooped.

"What upsets her most is her fear of Juco hating her for the lies she has sent him . . . not that she wanted to, of course. . . . Poor old Miquelina. She just didn't want Juco to suffer alone at school . . . and now Juco's returning. That's why I've come here now."

She spoke no further, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Your poor mother, Marcolina . . ."

The girl sighed. "Yes, I know, I know. . . ."

She burst into tears, trying at the same time to dry her eyes with her hands with their vividly painted nails. Imaculata tried to console her by stroking her still damp hair.

"It's all my fault," said Marcolina. "But, Ima, what am I to do? Return to the Hill because of Juco? God's my witness that I'd come running back this minute . . . but of course it's not feasible . . . quite out of the question. . . . Look here, Ima, even if I returned, sooner or later, Juco would find out all about me. You know what tongues they have on the Hill."

The thick-lipped Portuguese who had met Imaculata on

her arrival appeared at the door, to enquire at what time Marcolina wanted her lunch.

"Will you have it with me, Ima?" she asked.

Imaculata, however, refused. It wasn't possible, as she had to be back by midday. The other woman went off.

Imaculata got up to go.

"Ima, I'll dress in a jiffy and I'll come with you to the corner."

"Don't bother. I've got to go at once."

"No . . . you alone in such a street!"

"That's all right. . . . I'm off now."

She broke away from her friend's embrace.

"Good-bye, Marcolina."

For a moment they remained undecided and uncertain.

It was Marcolina who broke the silence of the farewell.

"Thanks, my dear . . . you haven't changed one little bit . . . if I were only pure like you . . ." She embraced her with emotion.

"Forgive me . . . and I hope Juco will too. I didn't do it to do wrong. . . ."

And in a lower voice she added :

"Look, Ima, will you ask Mother to forgive me as well? I've longed for her . . . so much . . . only God knows how . . ."

Her voice was full of tears.

"Ima dearest, you should not have come here, and never, never come back, not even when I'm dead. . . ."

And with a final embrace, her face close to her friend's, she said :

"This is a plague-spot . . . it's catching."

"Good-bye again, Marcolina," and with these words Imaculata ran down the staircase with its red carpet, followed by Marcolina. She reached the silver-painted gates.

Marcolina kissed her tear-stained face :

"Take this kiss for my mother."

And kissing her once again, added :

“And this one is for my godmother.”

Imaculata hastened away with her satchel of music under her arm, without looking back, in order not to see Marcolina crying too.

63

Zacarias no longer visited Seu Chico's house, and Imaculata enquired whether he was ill.

Amparo replied : “What nonsense ! The last time I went to the studio, just a week ago, he was bursting with health.”

After that she fell silent. Never had she spoken to anyone of what had occurred, in spite of her reputation as a gossip. She was going to prove to herself that she could keep a secret . . . and an important one at that.

The post, however, brought a letter from the painter. Seu Chico read it in a gust of laughter.

“Zacarias wasting paper, ink and a stamp to let me know he's busy with work.”

“Did he say when he'd be appearing ? ” asked Imaculata in a carefully indifferent voice.

“No.”

She lowered her eyes on to the waistcoat she was sewing and said no more.

64

For over a week the painter had not left his studio. He slept and ate badly, and the servant who looked after him scarcely recognized him. How changed he had become, with his dull staring eyes, talking to himself and waving his arms in a rage. He attempted to stifle his gnawing pain by work, but without success. He seemed to see a vision of Amparo in everything. After that one kiss the scent she used haunted him. He really must try and forget her. All that had happened must merely have been an illusion. After

all, one soon forgets one's hurts. . . . He deeply regretted the kiss he had given. Supposing Amparo had told her father? No, there could be no doubt about it, he had behaved very badly, like any cad, without dignity. For fifteen years Seu Chico had looked on him like a brother ; had helped him in moments of difficulty ; had clothed and fed him when he hadn't a crust of bread of his own. He had always wished the painter well and believed in him blindly. By allowing a daughter of his to pose for him, Seu Chico had given a further proof of his admiration and of his desire to help him once again with a beautiful and youthful model. How had he come, nevertheless, to lose his head? Surely no one could have sunk so low as he had. He accused himself, blamed himself, and for several days and nights he awaited a call from a Seu Chico distraught, with revolver in hand. . . . Had not Amparo given her word not to say anything . . . but still, a woman's promise . . . would it be kept, for once? He started drinking in order to dull his feelings and senses. The worst of it was, though, that when rambling through the streets he could not forget Amparo, but kept imagining that he recognized her in the features and bodies of the women who passed him, fearful of his sinister and sickly appearance.

His only consolation after a week of anguish was the letter from the unknown woman which reached him every Thursday morning, never missing a week, like a voice that came, he knew not whence, to soothe his deepest wounds and to tell him he was not alone in the world.

65

In the little café in Lapa district, Maria do Céu waited for the painter every night, and, although he did not appear, she continued her vigil. She gave herself to one man or another as they came and went, but to her they all had but one face and voice . . . those of the unknown man she had

nicknamed "Darky" and could not forget. She had got into the habit of seeing him night after night, looking for her. They had drunk beer together in coarse tumblers and had never talked much, but Maria used to look into his eyes, take his hands and cuddle against him, making herself as little as possible. How good it had all been! They had always left late, generally after two in the morning, when Lapa Square emptied itself of its last tired street-walkers. She had hung on his arm, happy, proud and content, and together, breathless, scarcely uttering a word, they had climbed the three flights of dark stairs to the attic. They had undressed noiselessly in order not to wake her child. How she loved it, when Zacarias possessed her in her spacious bed, and called her by little endearing names.

It was a fortnight since "Darky" had last appeared. One night he had drunk too much and at midnight had staggered with faltering steps into the little café with its green lights, where the mechanical piano was grinding out its romantic airs. Maria do Céó was there in her shabby tailor-made, her eyes glued to the entrance. How many nights she had waited for him! Men approached, making proposals to her; a sailor pulled out his wallet stuffed with notes, but she had neither ears nor eyes for any of them. She would have returned to her attic alone and in tears, had she not remembered how one night she had awakened her child by her weeping.

"Mother, are you crying?"

Hastily drying her eyes, she had replied, "No."

The boy had stood up in his cot, and Maria do Céó had taken him in her arms. "You're hungry, aren't you, Mummy?" he had asked. She had taught him never to cry on account of pain, but only if he felt hunger. The child pulled out from under the bolster his bottle still full of milk.

"You're hungry, mother darling. Don't cry. Take this," he called, holding the bottle out to her.

Darky suddenly came across the café, walking unsteadily. She rose to meet him.

"Darky!" she cried, taking him in her arms. She noticed that his breath reeked of rum.

"Who are you?"

"Me? I'm Maria do Céó."

"Maria do Céó?" he repeated. She guessed the name brought nothing to his mind.

He pushed her aside, making apparent his distaste. He looked around. The brightly lit room seemed to hurt his eyes, glazed by drink, and he left the café as he had entered, with staggering gait.

Maria do Céó caught him up in the street.

"Darky!"

He stopped.

"Why do you insist on following me?"

Maria do Céó took his arm.

"It's me!"

He opened his mouth in a huge grin and replied, "I think, madam, you've made a mistake . . . I'm not the person you're taking me for. . . ."

And in a lower voice, as if giving her advice, he continued: "If you don't stop following me, I'll call the pòlice."

He made off, and Maria do Céó had not the courage to pursue him.

A policeman on his rounds stopped to look at her inquisitively.

The calendar showed that it was the first day of spring, the 22nd of September.

Lucio could not have chosen a happier day to return to school, from which he had been away nearly two months. His return was unnoticed, nor did his schoolmates ask any questions, except one who, seeing him on his way to the schoolroom, enquired indifferently:



“What? . . . Still alive?”

He sat down quietly on the school bench. Jack smiled at him, a smile that meant as much to him as the beauty of the day outside, with its deep blue sky, trees in blossom and birds singing.

The first class was the drawing lesson conducted by Professor Braz, a deaf old man with a gentle voice. During his class, a great row went on in the room, benches started moving, feet stamped on the floor and paper darts were hurled. The teacher was quite oblivious to the noise, nor did his weakening sight help him much. All he did was with shaking hands to place the geometrical models of wood on the table for the boys to copy.

That morning the drawing master stepped up to the dais, on which a table had been placed. As usual this was the sign for his pupils to caricature his gestures.

When the class began, he recited the first part of the Lord's Prayer. He stopped, and it was the rule for the boys to recite the second half, starting with “Give us this day our daily bread.” The words were deliberately garbled, and the prayer-book took on the air of an indecent tale and an excuse for sniggers. “Amen” was pronounced without any respect for form, time or intonation.

The master opened his book, and called the roll, one by one.

“Arthur Villares.”

“Present.”

Each time he called a name Professor Braz looked around as if trying to find the boy for himself in the crowded classroom, as if his weary eyes were trying to recall the appearance of each one of them.

“Lucio Marianni.”

“Present.”

The teacher stopped and peered at the first bench. So Lucio was back again? A smile shone on his wrinkled face. He stopped the roll-call, and leaning over his desk he made a signal for Lucio to approach. Lucio rose, blushing, and

the eyes of all his class-mates, fixed on him, made his heart beat faster.

The drawing master spoke to him paternally.

"So! You're quite well again?"

The boy mumbled a reply.

The master made his excuses. "I didn't go to see you, I'm afraid—the climb up the hill is a bit too much for an old man like me. . . ."

A tremendous noise broke out in the classroom as the boys took advantage of the incident to make cat-calls, rustle with their feet, or slam their desk-lids.

The master continued in a lower voice. "I didn't go . . . but I always enquired about you from D. João Baptista . . . your schoolmates unfortunately never seemed to have any news at all."

The noise in the classroom increased.

Suddenly a friar, who was acting as prefect, appeared at the door, and in an instant all the voices were hushed and a great silence spread over the room with its hundred boys.

The friar's figure remained motionless at the door, near the blackboard. His hands were crossed over his habit, his eyes stared severely under his heavy eyebrows, and his bald head shone like an egg.

Neither the master nor Lucio had noticed his sudden entry.

"Go back to your bench," said the teacher, "and take good care of your health."

Lucio walked down the steps from the dais and came face to face with the friar standing erect, with his bird-like face emerging from his cassock.

The drawing master continued the roll-call.

"Luciano de Alencar."

"Present."

Lucio by this time had already taken his place on the first bench to the right, next to the door.

During the play-hour Lucio's heart overflowed with happiness. The indifference shown by his schoolmates

regarding his illness never troubled him, as they had always been excluded from his little intimate world. Besides, he had always looked upon them as brainless and entirely taken up with their games of football and visits to the cheap movies to see Tom Mix and William Farnum. He was happy, though, to realize that the teachers were fond of him. Always at the beginning of class, when his name was being called, the teachers halted for a moment and looked for him on the first bench to the right, in the front row. They always enquired after his health. This happened with all the masters, Braz, Piragibe, Feijó . . . even testy old Feijó . . .

But this happiness was soon dimmed by a shadow. Lucio could not forget the drawing master's words. "I always had news of you from D. João Baptista . . . your schoolmates never knew anything."

He repeated the last words to himself. But one of them knew very well . . . Jack. He excused him by convincing himself that the master had never asked him. He had noticed, however, that since his return, Jack had merely given him 'a smile, without exchanging more than half-a-dozen words. They had been used to talking together during the moments in which the masters took over from one another and the books were changed. Jack's manner, however, now seemed so different that Lucio had not the courage to hand him a Cuban stamp which Gloria-Helena had found on an old envelope in Dona Chiquinha's house. Perhaps it might be some silly jealousy, but there was no denying the change in his friend. The master had said that none of his schoolmates had ever had news of him, yet Jack had been to see him almost every other day.

During a break, Lucio looked for Jack and found him leaning against a pillar chewing an enormous sandwich, while the other boys were yelling and running after one another, or throwing a huge ball about. Lucio went up to his friend.

"Jack."

"Hallo."

Lucio started undoing the paper wrapping of his lunch.

"It's so good to be back at school," he said. "You know I was really missing it. . . ."

"Mm."

Jack seemed not to hear him, and continued eating his bread-and-butter.

Lucio was burning with curiosity.

"Didn't you hear what Professor Braz told me?"

"No."

"He told me . . ." and then he fumbled in his speech.

Jack showed his irritation.

"Come on. Out with it! . . . When do you propose to live like a human being?"

There was a brutal insinuation in his manner which frightened Lucio. He went on, however, "Old Braz said that not one of my class-mates had any news of me whatever."

He added hurriedly, "Did he ever enquire from you about my health?"

"Yes, he did . . ." and before Lucio could say anything further:

"He did, just when I was with a bunch of the boys."

He added:

"You know how beastly they can be."

Jack stopped short, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"He did ask me, but I hadn't the nerve to say that I went to see you regularly. You know how it is—these swine spend their time thinking up filthy stories. . . ."

He went on in a decisive tone:

"I'm tired of having rows on account of others."

Lucio stopped eating. What was the use of further questions? Perhaps Jack was right.

"After all, Lucio, there's only one way of living happily, and that is to adapt oneself . . ."

The other boys were calling Jack.

"All right, I'm coming," he replied, in answer to an invitation to join in a game of football.

Lucio looked around with an expression of surprise. In two months, boys who formerly had not spoken to Jack were now his intimates, calling him by his christian name and patting him on the back. He knew his friend was an athlete, keen on games, quick and tough, but he had not realized how like the others he was.

With half his lunch uneaten in his hand, Lucio made his way to the back of the grounds where they overlooked the sea.

"For after all, Lucio, there's only one way of living happily, and that is to adapt oneself."

The remark impressed itself on his mind, by the surprise of the discovery.

He tried to find excuses for Jack's attitude. He brought to mind his many thoughtful acts, the devotion he had shown him, "This is only for appearances' sake," he thought . . . on account of the evil tongues of others. Underneath it all, he's my friend.

Perhaps it might be well for himself to change. His illness had made him simpler ; less complicated, almost like his schoolmates who were playing football with Jack.

When the boys were leaving school and crowding out of the main gateway, Lucio met D. João Baptista, who was waiting for him.

"Are you in a hurry, Lucio?" As the boy replied that he was not, the friar said in a low voice : "Then come with me." Jack was standing a short distance away, and D. João Baptista, aware of their friendship, invited him too : "You come along too, Jack."

"Thank you, sir. . . . I'm afraid I can't. . . ." Without saying good-bye to Lucio, Jack mingled with the other boys who were crossing the grounds towards the Ladena Road.

Lucio pretended not to hear Jack's excuse, or to notice his manner, so different from that of former days. Hence-

forth he would merely be his companion in class. It would hurt a bit, but he would get over it. He could almost hear Panizoni in his cups making a remark which would console him : " There are no such things as lasting friendships or eternal love. Eternity is God's privilege."

D. João Baptista, followed by Lucio, entered the sacristy. " Lucio, I've a surprise for you."

D. João Baptista opened one of the drawers in a wooden press, from which came the odour of freshly ironed linen. His hands dipped amongst the cloths and withdrew a book which he placed before the boy's eyes. " It's for you."

The volume had a deep red velvet binding, and D. João Baptista carefully opened it and turned over the pages, about a hundred in number and all blank. On the first page was a painting of a golden wing and in a corner, in the friar's tiny writing : " For Lucio Marianni not to forget his friend D. João Baptista."

" What do you think of it, Lucio, eh ? "

The boy looked at the present in astonishment. What was this book, with its hundred blank pages, with its wing in gold on the front page, meant to be ?

" I sewed the velvet binding on myself," explained the friar, " as well as the whole book, page by page."

In his eyes shone an ineffable look of human kindness.

" I bound this book for you specially, Lucio," and placing it in his hands, he added : " . . . to write your poems in."

Lucio came down the hill leading from the school and entered Rio Branco Avenue. The city was gay for the first day of spring. Trams passed, full of schoolchildren singing songs and carrying flowers in their hands. Boy Scouts marched past to the sound of drums. All over the town there were parades of schoolboys. The movies were crowded with students, and children who that day received free passes.

Lucio was as happy as the festive day, for he was carrying

in his satchel the book given him by D. João Baptista. He no longer thought of Jack's callousness. He felt, like Seu Chico, that he had no time to suffer deep sorrow, not even from such ingratitude as Jack's. Life seemed so beautiful, with children singing, the spring, and that present from D. João Baptista : the book he was to fill with his poems.

On reaching Visconde de Inhauma Street, Lucio stopped for a moment. The traffic was intense and the boys in uniform from a military school, shouldering their rifles like real soldiers, marched by amid thunderous applause. They were neither going to nor returning from war, but they had the air of heroes, with flowers thrust down the muzzles of their guns.

Lucio watched them, his thoughts bent on the poems he would write on the blank pages of the book, and so he did not notice Jack leaning against a tree, waiting for him to pass and looking at him with an embarrassed air.

67

On finishing her music lesson, which during that week was given at night, Imaculata made an excuse to take a walk.

"Such a lovely night, Sá-Virginia. . . ."

The sky was glittering with a blaze of stars.

They set off together and walked endlessly down street after street. "This girl's got something on her mind," mused the darky, dragging her rheumatic legs along, but without a word of complaint. On the way, Imaculata suddenly said : "It's nearly fifteen days since Zacarias last appeared at home. . . . Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes," grumbled the old servant. Her legs were hurting her. What nonsense it was for Imaculata to be thinking of the painter at that hour. . . . For a moment they stopped at the Maison Moderne, starry with lamps, full of happy people.

"Are you tired, Sá-Virginia?" The darky was about

to answer that she was, but lacked the courage. How seldom had she seen her white mistress so happy, with such a shining face.

They turned down Carioca Street, full of movie houses and brilliantly lit cafés swarming with noisy crowds. They crossed Carioca Square with its taxi-ranks and its huge trees. Across the Rio Branco Avenue they continued. "Was the girl intending to go as far as the ferry-boats?"

Suddenly, however, they came to a narrow, dimly lit street and entered a vast café, with walls covered with mirrors. Sá-Virginia gave a sigh of relief as she rested her weary feet. Imaculata asked the waiter for two coffees, which soon appeared, fragrant and steaming.

Sá-Virginia gulped hers down quickly, but Imaculata for several minutes left hers untouched and looked around as if trying to find someone. Most of the faces she saw were those of strange men wearing large floral ties, who gesticulated excitedly. Others had huge crops of hair and sunken eyes. Imaculata remarked:

"D'you know where we are, Sá-Virginia?"

"No, I don't, but I have my doubts about it," grumbled the old woman. "It seems to be a café for madmen or lost souls. Just look at that one over there . . ." she said, pointing to a youth declaiming in a strange, impulsive manner, accentuating his words with the long, wasted fingers of a consumptive.

"This is the famous Artists' Café," continued Imaculata. "This is where all the painters, sculptors and musicians meet."

Sá-Virginia could not resist remarking: "I'd say, with such customers, this place will soon go broke."

Imaculata, however, was not listening. After a further glance around the café, she finished her coffee and got up to go.

At the first street-corner, Imaculata could no longer contain herself, and said: "I'm afraid we've come this



long walk for nothing, Sá-Virginia . . .” and added sadly, “I really thought we’d come across Zacarias there . . .”

Sá-Virginia at last understood the reason for their walk.

68

Very early on the next day a taxi stopped at the gates of Seu Chico’s grounds. Who could it be?

Imaculata ran to the terrace and turned pale, her heart beating. It was Zacarias who appeared, hatless and out of breath.

She called out happily: “Father, it’s Zacarias . . . he came by taxi.” Seu Chico could not believe his ears and came running out with the trousers he was ironing in his hand. Zacarias was quite close by now. “What’s up, my boy? Have you won the first prize in the lottery?”

The painter stopped in the middle of the garden, near the old jaboticaba-trees. “Don’t tell me you’re running away from the police?” Seu Chico said, laughing. Zacarias came nearer. “What? Isn’t Dona Josefa very ill?” he enquired.

“You’re sure you haven’t been dreaming, Zacarias? Or have you got a high fever?”

The painter looked perplexed as the children, Seu Chico, Imaculata and Amparo greeted him.

“Let’s go in,” said Seu Chico, “and you can tell me all about this mystery.” He continued, with an air of surprise: “Who put this story of Dona Josefa’s illness into your head? Have you been drinking?”

By this time they had reached the workroom, and Dona Josefa appeared, with that air of sadness which never left her.

Behind her came the old servant, her toothless mouth grinning.

The painter looked at her in a fury.

“Well, Sá-Virginia, what’s this tale you told me on the telephone?”

The old ducky could not stop laughing.

"Young man, I told you a lie about Dona Josefa's illness to see whether you would turn up here. . . ."

And in a gentler tone: "This old blackie often has longings for the famous painter."

Zacarias saw the humour of the incident. He had come at full speed, spending money on a taxi, after Sá-Virginia had telephoned, in a tearful voice, to let him know that Dona Josefa was really ill.

"It was the only way I could think of to try to get you to come."

Zacarias in turn was full of excuses . . . his hard life, endless work and so forth, all of which were criticized by the family.

"Pretty good, I must say," remarked Seu Chico.

Zacarias avoided Amparo's smiling gaze, as she sat by her mother's side. Imaculata could not conceal her pleasure. She noticed Sá-Virginia pointing her out to Dona Josefa by jogging her elbow and looking her way, and she blushed, half guessing the meaning of the gesture.

69

Panizoni turned up, looking more depressed than ever.

"What's the matter? Feeling ill?" asked Seu Chico, somewhat worried to see him after ten at night, when he should be at his theatre.

Panizoni sighed. "Ill! Certainly not, nothing of the sort." He sat down with a weary air. "I've lost my job . . . that's why I forgot the time."

Dona Josefa, who was sitting near, mending her youngest boy's trousers, looked at him for a moment.

"I arrived at the theatre late. No fault of my own, though. I mean to say, after to-day's rehearsals I went down to Onze Square to have a pint of beer . . . and forgot the time."

(At the beer-hall on Onze Square, they served customers with snacks and gave a movie show free.)

"On arriving at the theatre, the first act was already on. I ran to my dressing-room and was just getting ready when . . ." He checked himself, and then moving his big hand expressively, went on : ". . . that idiot of a stage manager came in. He let himself go and insulted me so that I let him have it . . . and hit him."

"What?"

"Yes, I went even further and kicked him out of my dressing-room and, taking off my costume, put on my clothes . . ."

Imaculata stopped her sewing to listen.

"And walked out. So, good-bye, job."

He rose and began marching from one side of the room to the other.

"I'm at the cross-roads. I'm sick of singing in the chorus. Sick to death of it. They never help one. No one ever helps me. I'm an unlucky devil, for it certainly isn't for want of a voice . . ."

He struck his chest with his fists.

"O-O-O-O," he sang till the walls shook.

Seu Chico smiled. Panizoni seemed to him very much out of sorts. This showing off was not like him at all.

"What about this note, now?"

And he gave forth a sustained note, clear and lovely.

He sang with the ease of a bird. It was as much a pleasure to hear him as it was for him to sing.

"They've thrown me into the street . . . they've brought me down. I'm only one of the chorus . . . but . . ."

He struck his chest again.

"But this . . . that God gave me, they can't take from me."

He burst into the first lines of "Vecchia Zimarra."

Dona Josefa was on the point of telling him not to make a noise and wake the children. But it was too late. Carried away with excitement and by the melody, Panizoni sang through the whole aria of the "Worn-out cloak."

The children, who were asleep, awoke half frightened and

ran to the workroom door, still drowsy, dragging their long nightshirts on the floor. Lucio, as could be seen from the expression on his pallid face, enjoyed the incident more than the others, who surrounded Dona Josefa. Panizoni's song came to an end.

"Bravo . . . encore . . . another song," applauded the apprentices. Panizoni looked at them. "What do you take me for, a machine?"

He smiled kindly on the children and petted them one by one. "Well, do you all agree?"

He patted Lucio's cheek and asked: "And how goes the poet?" Without waiting for a reply, he asked Gilberto, who had got out of bed carrying Milton in the palm of his hand:

"How's Milton?"

"He's woken up."

"How can you tell?"

"It's enough for anyone to sing, and he immediately wakes."

Panizoni laughed and seemed to have forgotten that he had lost his job.

He suddenly pulled out his watch, and a look of surprise came over his face.

"What . . . eleven o'clock already?"

He made as if to leave, but Seu Chico came up to him and said in a low voice:

"Where do you think you'll go to, now that they've thrown you out?"

He had no idea at all, as he paid for his lodgings day by day.

Seu Chico went on: "You go off and sleep in the boys' room until things get a bit better."

And so it was that Panizoni was not obliged to spend the night on a bench in the park.

One morning Lucio was called into the Headmaster's study. There, besides the Headmaster, he saw a handsomely dressed woman, with a faint odour of expensive scent, and the school doctor. He at once recognized the lady as Jack's mother.

"Good morning."

He saw at once, however, that she did not wish to shake hands. His face went white.

The three grown-ups looked at him thoughtfully.

The Headmaster received him with his usual kindness. He had sent for the school doctor to make a further diagnosis of his health, the reason being that, after his long illness, certain rumours had been circulating in the school. The Headmaster was at a loss to explain the situation to the boy. . . ."

The doctor, however, was franker and told him that he was too weak to carry on at school and that it would be best to send him far away into the mountains.

At once the story of Lucas' son flashed through Lucio's mind . . . of the boy who did not want to die, and of other boys on the hill with their diseased lungs and their continuous coughing. It was clear that the Head, Jack's mother and the doctor looked upon him as a carrier of a contagious disease. It was quite natural for them to have him examined ; in fact, it was advisable that they clear him of this evil reputation of spreading infection in a school where boys of three mixed races lived together.

Scarcely had the doctor explained to the boy the reason for calling him to the Headmaster's study than Lucio replied firmly :

"Aren't you a doctor ? If so, why don't you examine me right away ? "

His voice took on a note of decision which surprised even himself.

"It was what I was about to suggest myself," replied the doctor.

From a corner, the Headmaster and Jack's mother heard the dialogue in silence. Through the open window came the noise of children's voices at school prayers.

The doctor's careful examination lasted twenty minutes. He pressed his ear to the boy's skinny chest, listening carefully to his breathing and to any irregularities in the heart-beats. He felt the thorax with his fingers and listened attentively to his breathing between his shoulder-blades, telling him to take deep breaths and to count aloud.

When he had finished he turned round to the Headmaster and Jack's mother, and in almost indignant tones declared :

"The boy has nothing at all the matter with his lungs, neither does he suffer from any contagious disease."

Lucio listened to him in surprise.

"How old are you?" the doctor asked abruptly.

"I'll be thirteen in January."

"What he has is growing trouble. Anæmia and nothing else. The rest's just pure imagination," continued the doctor, his grave voice displaying considerable irritation. "Quite naturally, as Lucio is not very strong, he doesn't take any great interest in school games. D. João Baptista tells me he is fond of books."

"He is one of the brightest boys in his class," remarked the Headmaster with some embarrassment.

The doctor interrupted him with :

"To make that an excuse for stating that the boy should be asked to leave the school because he is dangerous to the health of his schoolmates is hardly in keeping with a school frequented by Catholics and directed by the clergy . . ."

At last Jack's mother spoke :

"I was wrongly informed, Doctor, and I would like to apologize."

She turned to the boy.

"You'll forgive me, won't you, Lucio?"

She stretched out her gloved hand, which Lucio refused to take.

The boy had a hard, challenging look in his green eyes, and without paying further attention to the other three persons in the room, he opened the study door and with a single movement closed it behind him. With slow steps he crossed the hall, walked down the steps to the yard at the entrance and made his way to the Abbey.

The nave was quite empty. He knelt and prayed, but his lips muttered no prayer learnt at home or at school, but one formed of his own words thanking God for all the sufferings He might think good to visit him with. Physical pain no longer affected him. It was necessary for his child-like soul to be stabbed with daggers of words and of bitter suspicion. He now clearly understood why, since his return to school, his classmates no longer bullied and ridiculed him as before. All had cut him, as if he were something repulsive or grotesque. Now he saw it all, and even attempted to defend and excuse Jack's behaviour in avoiding him both inside as well as outside school. In fact, he rather admired Jack's courage in not having asked to be removed to another bench, when convinced that Lucio was suffering from a contagious disease. Jack had obviously not wanted to hurt his feelings. . . . Poor Jack. . . .

Lucio spent a full hour on his knees, in a corner of the church dimly lit by the tiny lights which flickered in the massive silver candlesticks on the High altar.

71

Seu Chico's neighbour at No. 46 was due to be tried that afternoon. If convicted, he might be sentenced to as many as thirty years in prison.

The accused was to be brilliantly defended, for Seu Chico had taken pity on the unfortunate man's family and had gone on his own account to see Dr. Evaristo de Moraes. He had told him the story of the murder in old Lucas' store, and how it had seemed to him that the murderer had not acted deliberately but under the influence of drink.

Seu Chico explained that should the famous lawyer accept the case, he could find a handful of witnesses for him. If a criminal there were, it was not the workman from No. 46 but the whole social system which favoured the enrichment of spirit manufacturers at the expense of the health of millions. Besides, added Seu Chico, the poor had no other pleasure, after a day of hard labour for miserable wages, than to propagate their species. From time to time they attempted other entertainments such as wearing new clothes on Sundays, attending sung Mass or following Church processions, so pleasing to the eye and ear. Others, however, like the neighbour at 46, ended by spending their time in rum-shops like that of Lucas and getting drunk. Who could prevent such unfortunates from arming themselves with a knife or gun?

Dr. Evaristo listened to the tailor's story and finally said : " But after all, it seems to me that you don't require a lawyer for this case."

Seu Chico looked at him with surprise.

" I know of no better pleader than yourself," added Dr. Evaristo, and with a smile promised to accept the defence of the workman, without fee, out of friendship for Seu Chico, whom he had never seen before, but who had conquered him with his enthusiasm.

72

Henrique went out to breathe the fresh air on this starlit night. He wandered far and wide through the city and felt inclined to see the last showing at the Iris Cinema. Whilst reading the title of the film, " Honour Your Mother," he thrust his hands in his pockets to count his small change and found that he had not enough even for a ticket in the cheaper seats.

Continuing his walk as far as Carioca Square, he met Zacarias, who asked : " What are you doing here, my lad ? "

It was 9.30, and Henrique explained that he had felt



too restless to study and had therefore come out to stretch his legs. It was useless to stay at home, he continued, owing to the noise made by the party. Hadn't Zacarias read the evening papers and seen how the workman at No. 46 had been acquitted? Seu Chico was wild with delight. Dr. Evaristo had surpassed himself in his speech for the defence. He had spoken for hours, and at the end of it even the jury were moved to tears. Did Zacarias mean to say he hadn't seen the news?

"But, my dear Zacarias, the most impressive moment occurred almost at the end of Dr. Evaristo's speech. That fellow is a real genius. He took a note from his pocket, just a slip of paper. It was a letter that the son of the accused—you remember that poor little yellowish-looking boy, a friend of Gilberto's, don't you?—had written to the judge. Dr. Evaristo then read the note. My dear Zacarias, it made me go all funny inside. It said, 'Dear Mr. Judge, My father is a very good man and is innocent.' From that moment he had the jury in his pocket, and when he had finished the noise was deafening. Everyone cheered. The judge ordered silence in the Court. The prosecuting counsel had nothing further to say, and the jury, after a short consultation, returned a verdict of acquittal on the ground that when the deed was done the accused was not in his right mind."

Zacarias listened in silence, smoking his cigarette.

"I don't think that since the declaration of war against Germany I have ever seen the people on the hill so thrilled as they were when they heard the news. It's a regular beanfeast. Father, who hasn't done a stroke of work for two days now, is the maddest of them all."

They stopped in front of the Brahma beer-hall.

"Let's go in," said the painter.

They entered and sat at one of the corner tables. The orchestra was playing something sad from "Tosca." They ordered their drinks.

Henrique, after his fourth glass of beer, risked a question.

“What’s new up your way, Zacarias?”

“Nothing whatever.”

The painter lit another cigarette which he had carefully rolled himself with his long fingers.

“I was forgetting, though . . . there is something new. D’you remember that picture that was turned down for the Salon? Well, I sold it to-day, and I’m pleased to think that once again the opinion of the Salon has to give way to the taste of those who appreciate real art.”

He changed his tone.

“They accused me of not belonging to any one school. They forget that art is not a thing that can be taught, apart from its mechanical rudiments. Every time I mention this matter it reminds me of a picture by the Italian artist, Signorini, which shows two children, their eyes red with tears, looking at two hens scratching in a yard. It is called: ‘Happy Chickens that do not go to school.’”

He swallowed a further draught of beer.

“Those idiots at the Salon refusing my picture! They forget that a picture of mine, before giving pleasure to others, has to please me. The ones I like best are the ones I don’t sell. Let me tell you something, Henrique.”

He emptied his glass, and placing it aside, ordered another from the waiter. He leant forward, his elbows on the table.

“If to-morrow I should win the lottery, there’s one thing I’d do. I’d buy back all the pictures I’ve sold to museums, galleries and private collectors, and never again would I sell any works of mine to anyone!”

The waiter brought along another glass of beer.

“One thing I learnt,” continued Zacarias, “sincerity is one of the greatest things in art . . . but in life it’s the worst. . . .”

He tossed down the contents of his glass in one gulp, and once again called the waiter. “The bill . . .”

He made as if to rise and, turning to Henrique, said: “Let’s go.”

He paid the bill that the waiter brought, without waiting for the change. It was his pride to tip well.

On their way out, the orchestra started a popular tune, an air of the cowboys of the North. Zacarias stopped at the door: "D'you hear that, Henrique? That music is like a landscape with its human element. It is understood everywhere, although in dialect. I'd consider myself the happiest painter alive if I could find the dialect behind each landscape. To be able to place in a picture the true figures, in their true settings at their right moment . . ."

He left, followed by Henrique, who looked upon him as being as intelligent and as cultured as Professor Liro, who was supposed to know everything. They continued their walk, side by side. As they passed the International Circus, its gaudy posters seemed to shriek at them. Beyond it rose the walls of the Ajuda Convent, on which street-boys wrote foul remarks in charcoal. They reached the Passeio Publico. "What about another beer here?" suggested the painter, as they walked past the open-air café situated amongst the trees, where, on a small stage at the back, music-hall artists sang their songs.

"Just as you please," replied Henrique.

"No. . . . The show is so awful that, although it might not affect my feelings, it would ruin my beer."

The café was crowded. A woman with a feather hat and a silver sequin dress lit up the tiny stage as she sang, accompanied by a drowsy pianist playing on an untuned piano.

They strolled on and came to Visconde de Maranguape Street, where they paused before a small beershop with some palm-trees growing in tins in front of the entrance. As he went in Henrique noticed a board on which the name of the bar was picked out by red lamps. All the tables, which were separated from each other by small wooden screens, were crowded. Waiters passed to and fro, carrying on their glittering trays their loads of golden beer. Every table was covered with full or half-empty glasses.

On a raised dais an orchestra of three played popular melodies. Some of the audience sang.

Henrique and Zacarias crossed the crowded room, colliding with men entering and leaving, some of whom were completely drunk. There were even stains of vomit near the entrance.

Zacarias stared towards the back of the room, looking for an empty table. The orchestra was playing, for the tenth time that night, "The Soldiers' Song." (Since Brazil was at war the people felt that at least they could sing martial airs.)

"Darky! . . ."

Someone seized the painter's coat. He turned and replied to the voice that had called him so tenderly: "Oh, it's you, how are you?"

It was Maria do Céu. Her eyes shone as softly as ever, and she appeared more fragile, paler and prettier than before.

"Darky, come and sit here by me."

She pointed to a table from which she had risen and where stood a half-empty glass of beer.

"But aren't you waiting for someone?"

"For you."

He introduced her to Henrique, and they sat down together—Zacarias by the side of the girl and Henrique opposite.

Zacarias ordered beer. Maria do Céu, close to Zacarias, asked him in a low voice:

"Where have you been all this time, Darky?"

"Oh, just going about," he replied, waving his hand in a vague gesture. She smiled and, as if his indifference in no way hurt her, asked, "Going about? Why, for over two weeks I've been here every night waiting for you."

Zacarias laughed. "Really?"

She replied, "It's the truth," and with a sigh, "If you only knew . . ." The waiter brought three large beers.

Zacarias drank both his and the girl's, swiftly, one after the other, and ordered another round.

Henrique looked around the room and realized that the couple wanted to be left alone.

"For two whole weeks and more, Darky, I've waited your return. Ever since that night, do you remember? You've been so bad to me."

Zacarias was drinking wildly now, whole glasses almost at a gulp. Henrique, drinking slowly, was still at his first glass.

As the painter kept staring at the neighbouring table, Maria do Céu took his arm: "All that's over with now, isn't it?"

Zacarias paid no heed, but turning to the waiter ordered more beer.

Henrique protested, "Do you really want another?" He guessed that Zacarias must now be completely intoxicated, as ever since they met he had been drinking steadily.

"Yes, of course. Why shouldn't I?"

She interposed:

"What is it, Darky darling?"

He pushed her away with his arm and cried out: "Don't keep on annoying me . . ." and staring straight at her, he continued in a thick voice: "Lay off, will you? I'm sick of your acting. What do you expect to get out of me, love and romance?"

He laughed. The orchestra was now playing a famous aria from "La Bohème."

"To hell with the bloody music," roared Zacarias.

And dizzy with drink, with the froth of the beer on his lips, he whispered to Maria do Céu:

"You think that I'm of the age for a love-idyll? Even if I were, I wouldn't pick on a tart like you. . . ."

His words became confused. He stammered. In his inmost heart there were still traces of feeling. It was late, however, and Maria do Céu arose. She made no further effort to hold him, and Henrique tried to make excuses.

"Don't take any notice. He's . . ."

Zacarias belched, and a man at the next table cried to him:

"What's up, Zacarias? The old ship swaying a bit?"

Maria do Céu had by this time left the bar and gone into the street.

Henrique followed and caught her up as they reached the first corner.

"Maria do Céu."

She stopped and he repeated her name.

"What do you want?" she asked, raising her handkerchief to her smarting eyes, with shaking hands.

"I saw you leaving in such a hurry. I know he made you suffer. You must forgive him, though. He's very drunk."

She stifled a sob.

"It's all over. I look upon him as dead. I feel as if I were coming from his funeral, first-class coffin, wreath, clod of earth and everything complete. He's dead."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be."

By this time they had taken the first few steps down the Mem-de-Sá Avenue. "I'm sorry no longer," insisted the girl.

She stopped beneath a street-lamp which lit up the corner of the street. She looked and saw in him a handsome, pink-cheeked youth. "How old are you?"

He felt ashamed as always at giving his real age, and added a couple of years.

"Eighteen."

"Eighteen?" she pondered. She started walking on with short steps. "Eighteen. At your age people still feel sorry, then they forget all that may cause them and others harm."

Stopping at the corner of Arcos Street, she added:

"Thank you, anyhow, for your kindness. Good night . . ."

She stretched out her pale hand, which Henrique somewhat timidly took in his.

"Good night."

Suddenly he blurted : " I'd like to see you some other time . . . and to be, if you cared, your friend."

She smiled. " You show your eighteen years all right. Whoever takes a tart as a friend ? No one could take you for anything but eighteen . . . youth is ever heedless."

A negro from the other side of the street was beckoning her, while she, as she was saying farewell to Henrique, made the black man a curious sign with her head.

" Good night," she said, and as Henrique was still waiting for a word from her, she added : " You'll always find me around here, whenever you feel inclined to see me. . . . My beat is at this corner."

She withdrew her hand from his and made her way towards the negro, who took her arm. Together the two went off side by side down the gloomily lit Arcos Street.

73

The following day Henrique could not get Maria do Céó's image out of his head. He visualized her pale eyes glittering like blazing coals, her white face almost ghostly. He realized now why so many men lose their heads over pale, anæmic, consumptive-looking women.

Did she live with that negro who seemed to know her so intimately, did he kiss and possess her ? How insignificant, contemptible and third-rate now appeared to him that other woman whose lover he had been and to whom he had given, as a magnificent gesture, the catskin fur.

Zacarias, he thought, must really be a blind fool, not to keep Maria do Céó for himself, with her husky voice charged with mystery.

If he were only more grown-up, with his future secured, how many people he would make happy ! Only the evening before, when he was returning to his little school at Oriente Street, he had met Gloria-Helena leaving the Old Owl's haunt. The poor girl's eyes were red.

“What’s all this, Gloria?”

She showed him her hands badly bruised by strokes from a cane.

“Twenty cuts . . . I was reading aloud when Dona Chiquinha started nodding and snoring. I stopped my reading and she awoke at once. She noticed I wasn’t reading though I had the book open on my lap. She fetched her cane . . . and this is what she did.” She showed her bruised hands.

“Don’t say anything about it at home, though,” begged Gloria. “I need the money so . . .”

She stopped. Henrique thus came to know that his sister was beaten just as the ex-slave Inacia was.

Henrique went on dreaming of freeing Imaculata from her sewing-machine, of seeing to it that Amparo was better dressed than Lucas’ daughters, of how he would buy a villa in the hills for Lucio, and of putting a stop for ever to Gloria-Helena’s reading aloud to the old aristocrat.

A feeling of shame suddenly came over him. Only last Saturday he had spent the twenty milreis he had saved from his salary in some brothel or other, on a woman who had given herself mechanically. How had he come to spend in five minutes what his sister had to suffer blows to gain in a week?

In spite of all, the image of Maria do Céu returned to haunt him anew. He could clearly see her, beautiful and frail . . . shining white. Zacarias, he reflected, had no taste.

The boys in the class were silently writing in their copy-books a description of the sea.

Henrique’s thoughts were far away, as far off as the sea the boys were writing about, and he saw himself standing in that dimly lit corner of Arcos Street, while a negro beckoned to Maria do Céu.



On the first Sunday of November, in the afternoon, there appeared on Paula Mattos Street a stand erected on a little cart. The whole hill went wild with excitement, and the apparition was surrounded by a mass of street urchins.

"It's a puppet-show."

The performance took a long time in starting, and in order to attract the public a barrel-organ began playing popular airs. Seu Chico, who was dozing under a tree, awoke at the joyful shouts of his children, who were thrilled at this little street theatre on wheels.

"Hurry up, Father."

"What is it?"

"A puppet-show . . . come along."

He went, urged on by his children's cries.

"Hurry up, Father."

In front of the cart a temporary stage had been erected. Seu Chico felt his heart beat in suspense. One of his dearest wishes was going to be realized. From the books he had read and stories told by his friends who had travelled, he had often dreamt of the little show, with its wooden or sawdust-stuffed puppets set in action by strings.

The curtain rose at last, but, instead of dolls, dogs appeared, who acted sitting on their hind-legs, wearing red dress-suits and tiny black top-hats.

Seu Chico was furious.

A shame, that was what it was, training poor harmless dogs to imitate human movements. Around him the crowd was enjoying itself hugely. He felt like protesting, but what was the use? It would only mean destroying the enjoyment of these children who had such few means of entertainment in their lives.

Seu Chico called his children.

"Let's go."

"But, Father dear . . ."

"Off with you."

There was a threatening undertone in this order of his. The crowd made a path for the family as they made their way out in a rage against their father. They were climbing the slope of the hill when Seu Chico spoke :

" I can't see what pleasure any of you could derive from such a show. You mean to tell me that it isn't cruelty to make those poor dogs go through their acrobatics ? "

No one replied.

But Gloria-Helena's thoughts turned to Dona Chiquinha, in whose house the dogs were treated so differently from those in the street show, and had greater comforts than most of the boys on the hill.

## 75

Next morning, Professor Liro, on being told of what had taken place on the previous evening, entirely agreed with Seu Chico. The City Council always closed their eyes to such horrors. It was a downright shame. Of course, the poor trash on the hill had never seen anything finer. It was quite sufficient for such as those to be entertained by barrel-organs on which parakeets perched and drew your fortune, or by street-singers and dog theatres.

A pretty pass things had come to, with dog theatres ! But in Brazil, the real theatre no longer found a place. One had only to see the dreadful performances in the theatres in the Rocio Square to realize it.

They were in the dining-room. Gloria and Gilberto, with their books neatly arranged on the table, and their copy-books open, waited for the lesson to begin. Seu Chico had, however, come in to wish the Professor good-day and had told him what had occurred on the previous evening in great detail. Forgetting time and lessons, the two of them soon lost themselves in theatrical memories.

" I wonder if you ever saw, at the Recreio Dramatico, Lucinda Simões, Ismenia dos Santos, or Vasques, Lopicolo, Concetta and old Machado. I well remember the cliques

that used to be formed—and the crowded and enthusiastic galleries.”

“Once,” Professor Liro recounted, “once I remained till late, at the stage door, waiting for Lucinda. With me were I don’t remember how many students—perhaps two hundred. As soon as she appeared to get into her carriage, we all cheered her loudly and called her by name. Many threw flowers, and before she entered her carriage she picked me out from other students and kissed me, saying: ‘Share that with the others.’ I was thrilled. It was as if our Princess Isabel had kissed a slave.”

“During that time I never missed a show,” interrupted Seu Chico, “by foreign or native actors. In those days the greatest companies visited Rio, Sarah Bernhardt for instance—Coquelin—Suzanne Desprès—Antoine.”

“What about Le Bargy, though? He was sensational. Did you ever see Guitry or La Ristori?”

“I should say I did. They were marvellous. I also saw Salvini—and another who made a great name for himself was Rossi—Novelli also—and Lyda Borelli and Tina de Lorenzo.”

Professor Liro seemed to have forgotten that pain of his in his left breast. He asked enthusiastically:

“What of Martinelli, Seu Chico, did you ever hear his like?”

“Ah, Professor, don’t speak of him. Whilst he was here, I became, for a few days, his dresser, a glory I shall carry to my dying day. Just think of it—I was once dresser to a genius.”

Professor Liro recalled La Duse.

“I saw her in 1885. What an actress! The greatest of all time. She had but to appear on the stage and say a few words to make me almost choke with emotion. She had the gift of soothing the soul. After seeing her in ‘La Dame aux Camélias,’ when on her death-bed she cries out, ‘Armand,’ life has somehow felt different to me.”

He sighed.

"I was then twenty-four. Well! Since that day I saw Duse act I changed my life—I think for the better. I swore then that I would never hate anyone in the world. She had changed me . . ."

76

The eighth issue of *The Swallow* published on the whole of the front page a score of Lulu's music, in the original script. It was thus that the pianist with the silent, sad air found a way of expressing his thanks.

This issue, patiently copied by Gloria-Helena, who was becoming an expert on the typewriter, appeared almost unnoticed, in spite of an article by Professor Liro on the droughts in North-east Brazil.

The attention of *The Swallow's* readers was taken by the great event of the week. Seu Chico, seized by his long-standing desire, had stacked in the large living-room a great number of planks with which he proposed to erect a stage. For a curtain, he had got together numerous samples of cloth which he had amassed. The girls had already started sewing these patches of every colour together in every kind of geometrical design.

"Like Harlequin's costume," commented Panizoni, who, owing to his inability to find a job and having no money for food or lodging, was still living in the house.

Seu Chico could not contain his happiness.

"We'll call it the 'Harlequin's Theatre.'"

Dona Josefa, in spite of her promise to help sew the curtain, disapproved of her husband's love of the theatre, which his children seemed to have inherited. Born, as she had been, in a far-away village, where she had a severely religious upbringing, the theatre to her had an odour of sin, and she watched with anxiety the contagious madness of her husband and children. The only talk was of their theatre; and she reflected how at first it had been *The Swallow*, which had led to the reckless purchase of a brand-

new typewriter. Now it was this theatre. She wondered gloomily what the next adventure was going to be.

77

Christmas was the season when Seu Chico was busiest. Orders poured in, and the shops for which he did the sewing did not know how to satisfy their numerous customers.

Seu Chico nevertheless turned a deaf ear to his wife's lamentations when she said: "Chico, do you know it's only seven days before Christmas?"

"Seven days? So it is."

Time for him no longer existed. The theatre entirely absorbed him.

The miracle was taking shape, and Seu Chico's hands were busy everywhere—repairing the electric wiring, nailing the planks, building benches and rustic furniture. The garden, also, took much of his time. He drove in stakes for the shrubs, hoed the flower-beds, and cleaned the stems of orchids, budding and protecting them. Roosts had to be built for Gilberto's chickens, and dog-kennels made, as well as a cage of shells for Milton. Seu Chico's hands were truly those of a magician. He could turn them to any job, those hands of his which so fervently applauded all that was beautiful in this world—acting, music, paintings, books. Henrique recollected, one night, his father taking him to see Esperanza Iris at the São Pedro Theatre. Henrique's lasting impressions, though, were less of the beautiful and inspiring Mexican star than of his father's hands, quivering with enthusiasm and joy, applauding endlessly at the close of each act.

Those hands that never seemed to tire in cutting cloth, fitting coat linings, sewing backs and ironing suits, now sought a new adventure in Seu Chico's spare time—that of erecting the miracle of a stage.

With what enthusiasm had Seu Chico, helped by his

apprentices, carried those heavy boards, and with his mouth full of nails, given orders, instructing them as to the size of the planks that should be cut and where they were to be placed ! The stage when finished would take up about half the living-room. The back of the stage was about eighteen inches from the door and from the windows that led out to the garden. Seu Chico proposed building four steps there, to make the exits and entrances of the actors somewhat easier. The room on the right, which was Sá-Virginia's oratory, was to be the actors' dressing-room. The old black servant protested at first. How could she allow her saints to witness what was to her perdition, the children making up their faces, powdering their hair, darkening their eyes with kohl ? To her it seemed a sacrilege—and Dona Josefa concurred—the idea of the children dressing up in silks and gold trappings, in hired costumes, to act before an audience of barefooted children. Seu Chico, however, had not time to pay heed to these futilities.

Hardly was dinner over, when Seu Chico, his children and the apprentices—all thought of reading the news or running about the grounds thrust aside—hurried into the living-room, which nowadays resounded every night to hammer blows and the excited chatter of voices.

Panizoni, in his rôle of Director, was extraordinarily entertaining. The actors comprised a considerable handful, which included all the children, the apprentices and some neighbouring boys. Panizoni encouraged Lucio to write the play with which they would open, but the latter was greatly taken up with the coming school examinations, as, owing to his two months' absence, he was much behind-hand. He felt he must make up for lost time. More than ever, he pored over his books, and finally, in less than a month and a half, after a great effort, he managed to catch up with his class. But in spite of seeing him thus surrounded by his books and notes, Panizoni did not relinquish his idea of getting Lucio to write the opening piece, which should be in verse. The subject was chosen by the baritone

himself. Since the theatre was Harlequin's, why not write a drama on Harlequin?

Lucio got to work, and in less than a couple of nights he had completed "The Drama of Harlequin," in verse.

No adverse criticism was offered when Lucio read it to his father. Seu Chico was even more enthusiastic than Panizoni, and rehearsals began without delay.

Dona Josefa could only thank her stars that the little theatre had started at the end of the year, when the schools were closed for three months. Otherwise what would happen to the children and their homework if it took up all their time?

Sá-Virginia and Luiza no longer heard the children asking them to recount fairy-tales: the latter were now living, on their stage, the lives of those nobles and princes in the stories they had read or listened to.

78

Henrique went out. He felt he could no longer stay indoors. All that chatter of voices, piano music and the hammering and sawing were getting on his nerves.

Dona Josefa saw him put on his hat, and from a distance heard him say good night.

Henrique walked through the grounds blazing with fire-flies. He was going far away from those old, friendly trees, under whose shade he had so often studied, far from that ancient street of Paula Mattos, where he was born and had grown up, and with whose houses, walls and people he was so intimate.

"Good night, Henrique."

"Good night."

One wasted a lot of time in greetings in this quarter, where everyone, like the country-folk, knew each other so well.

Henrique reached the corner of Mem-de-Sá Avenue and Arcos Street, where there was a constant turmoil of wheeled traffic and passers-by. The street-lamps cast an air of romance on this sordid corner. From the bars near by, out of which drunkards lurched, came the blare of cheap music.

The clock of Lapa Street church struck ten. It was early yet.

A fortnight ago Maria do Céó had told him : " Turn up here. My beat is here," and he had not forgotten her words.

Perhaps she might be found at the bar, where he had met her first. If he did not see her there, he would return to the corner. He went as far as Maranguape Street and entered the bar, which, as usual, was crowded with men of all ages and colours. The topic of the war was like a gramophone record being played at all the tables.

He sat down in a corner near the orchestra dais, his eyes on the door. He had to see her again. He ordered a beer, which the waiter brought him, and called for two glasses, trying thus to give the impression that he was waiting for someone. He drank slowly, in fear of finishing too soon.

The music from the orchestra filled the smoke-laden room. They were playing the same sad air from " La Bohème."

The image of Maria do Céó returned to his mind, dressed as Mimi, entering the poet's room in search of a light. She too had pale hands. Were they cold, he wondered ? Perhaps she also, like Mimi, was consumptive.

Her life fitted into the eternal triangle of the cough, hollow eyes and hospital. He became depressed. Everyone who occupied a humble station in life was always nearer death than the more fortunate. There seemed to him a kind of brotherhood of sorrow, uniting prostitutes, artists and the poor children on the hill.

Maria do Céó did not seem to be coming. A large wall-



clock over the door struck ten-thirty, and he decided to wait until eleven. The orchestra came to an end of their aria, which was followed by applause and cries of encore. An enthusiastic customer gave orders to serve beer to the musicians. The pianist, with a full glass in his hand, turned to thank the giver. Henrique saw it was Lulu, who wore his usual sad and awkward air, of one who did not know what to do with his hands except to touch the piano keys. Lulu in turn recognized Henrique, and came to his table without being called.

"What are you doing here, Henrique?"

His eyes caught sight of the two glasses.

"Waiting for someone?"

"I was . . ."

Lulu sat down opposite Henrique and accepted a glass of beer. He asked after his family. So Lucio was definitely cured? How was the little theatre getting on, and the rehearsals? Imaculata had telephoned him to tell him that she was shortly going to play one of his waltzes in the first scene of the opening performance. Was it really true? The night before, he had met Seu Chico in town, and he had only one topic of conversation, the play and the rehearsals in the little theatre.

"And you, Lulu, how are things with you?"

"With me?"

He smiled sadly. "My life goes on much the same. Very lonely, of course, as my family hates me. I must say, though, that they only cause me annoyance, too. We musicians are always hated, either because we have too little or too much talent . . . I am the sheep in the flock that has strayed. I live quite alone."

Henrique said:

"But didn't you tell me the last time I saw you that you were in love?"

"Yes, I did."

"What happened?"

Lulu sighed.

"My love is so difficult to handle."

And choosing his words with difficulty, he continued :  
"I've suffered a great deal, Henrique . . ."

He drank the rest of the beer as an outlet for his feelings. The violinist, accompanied by the 'cello-player, was playing Schubert's "Serenata." The smoke-laden air seemed charged with remorse. Lulu called a waiter and asked for still more beer. Turning to Henrique, he muttered :  
"To-night you're my guest."

Suddenly he confessed that he was madly in love, as never before in his life. No one knew of it, however . . . his love thrived on secrecy, behind a mask, as it were. Each day his agony was renewed, but never in his life had he met anyone like this creature, so full of character and beauty. He was quite happy in his suffering. Whilst describing this ideal being of his, he returned to his usual state of indecision, as if the matter had no relation to sex, or indeed to this world. He gave the impression either that words embarrassed him or that he was ignorant of them. He loved a certain being in a very vague way, rather as if this love of his were but the extension of the mystery of music, which, more than any other art, conveys a sense of incompleteness with its individual liberty of interpretation. Henrique noticed that one of Lulu's hands showed severe scratches.

"What's this, Lulu? Fighting with cats . . .?"

The pianist stretched his hand out on the table. The marks had evidently been made with a pen-knife.

"What were you saying?"

He smiled vaguely.

"Just proofs of love and jealousy. . . . I'm tired of hearing people say that I only really know how to love one thing . . . my piano. . . . We had a big row the other night. . . ."

And he continued in a confidential tone :

"A terrible row. . . . My love struck me and kicked me. . . . A fearful business . . . and when we both cooled

off I had the back of this hand hacked by a penknife and bleeding. But the same night I bandaged it as best I could and came here to play as usual. It hurt terribly. But within myself I was happy at the thought of my love being jealous of my hands and my piano."

The orchestra was calling for Lulu. He rose and paid the bill and, requesting his friend to remember him to his family, said, "I'll come round to see you next week. I'm mad keen about your little theatre. . . ."

Just as he was about to climb on to the dais, he continued, "Not a word, Henrique, to anyone about what I've told you. . . ."

"Don't worry . . . I shan't say a thing. . . ."

"Could I ask you just one thing more?"

"What is it?"

"Don't stay here after eleven. . . . This table is reserved for my love after that time. . . . My love remains here drinking, hour after hour, till closing-time at two a.m., waiting for me."

He laughed.

"I can't make up my mind whether I'm happy or miserable." With these words, he hurried on to the orchestra platform.

80

Henrique left. The fresh night air, mingled with the scent of cheap face powder, soon made him forget Lulu's sentimental problems.

The Lapa church clock struck eleven. Strange, he reflected, how the striking of church bells seemed to be part of all his steps in life. He taught class to the sound of the Neves Church chimes. For years, at the São Bento School, he had studied, listening eagerly as the church clock struck the successive quarters, and thus shortening his hateful hours in class. As he walked along, he was continuously bumping against soldiers and sailors.

Motors crossed, hooting madly. People poured into the street from all sides, a regular ant-heap which gathered and dispersed, to reappear farther on. Women passed, some badly dressed, others with rich fur stoles over their shoulders. Some wore dragging slippers ; many were in low-cut evening dresses. One odour dominated all others, that of sweat. A few of the women smiled and turned their eyes and hips impertinently at the men who were making propositions to them under their breath.

By the light of a street-lamp, Henrique recognized Marcolina, who was talking to a gross-looking man wearing a diamond ring on his little finger. He pretended not to see her, but the sight of her gave him a shock. She was the first love of his boyhood days, and there she was, leaning against a lamp-post, her face painted like a doll, her eyes darkened with kohl. He felt sure that as she walked, she would swing her hips like all the other women who walked past, like cattle shown at a fair.

At the corner of Maranguape Street, he came across Maria do Céu, dressed entirely in white with a silver ribbon through her hair, tied in a shining bow over her forehead. She was not alone, but with the same tall negro he had seen before. He hurried away.

81

Zacarias stopped by the door of the living-room. There, in front of him, he could see two yards of a real stage.

Seu Chico, he pondered, was really a marvel. He had built, over a series of firm supports, a short slope which led to the side reserved for the public. His enthusiasm had spread to the family, and even Dona Josefa was helping to sew the large patchwork drop curtain.

He had called Zacarias and for over an hour held him fascinated : " You've got to make the settings . . . very simple. . . . "

" Where's the prompter's box ? " asked Zacarias, observ-

ing the lack of one on the stage front, before the curtain, where Seu Chico had already placed little coloured lamps.

"The prompter's box?" laughed Seu Chico, "that's only necessary in a big theatre where they don't know their parts by heart, but not here. . . ."

Zacarias said no more. He knew that he was beaten.

82

Panizoni's state of continuous unemployment could not go on. The baritone passed days on end, wandering from one side of the house to another as happy as a schoolboy in holiday-time. For long periods he would remain, forgotten by all, sitting in a corner, reading or smoking his pipe.

Two months had now gone by since Panizoni had moved into Paula Mattos with his suitcase filled with the few clothes he possessed, awaiting a new job, and in the meantime eating and sleeping. Seu Chico was blind, or at any rate did not notice the hole an extra place at table made in the rations. He seemed to see himself repaid every night at seeing Panizoni rehearsing his children and the apprentices for the first play to be produced at the little theatre.

One evening Gilberto had gone as usual to fetch bread at the baker's in Senado Street, and had returned with empty hands.

"What happened?" asked his mother.

Gilberto whispered so that no one should hear: "The baker told me he'd not let us have any more. He said our bill was enormous."

That night Dona Josefa dug out a few milreis notes she had saved and hidden at the bottom of a drawer. Some bread was bought at the shop at the corner . . . enough at least for the apprentices to eat for dinner.

She felt humiliated at the thought of their knowing what had happened.

"This sort of thing can't go on, Chico. We're just

killing ourselves. There isn't even enough money to buy bread."

And plaintively she continued: "That's why I'm complaining, that's why I am grumbling when . . ."

She was about to speak of the expenses incurred in connection with the little theatre, with the typewriter, with Henrique's lessons and Imaculata's piano tutor, but decided to say nothing. Instead, she commented: "That's why, when I see someone like Panizoni, healthy and well, living here at our expense, I feel I've got reason to complain . . . don't you?"

With these words still ringing in his ears, Seu Chico half-an-hour later went off down Senado Hill.

### 83

The Republica Theatre was crammed. The posters announced the appearance of Bergamaschi in "Tosca." Seu Chico asked the doorman whether the producer, Biloro, had already arrived.

"That's him there," replied the porter, pointing to a short fat man who was chatting to a group of men-friends. Seu Chico went up to him.

"Senhor Biloro?"

The producer stopped talking and turned round.

"Do you want to speak to me?" he asked politely.

Seu Chico answered: "Yes, if it is possible, privately. . . ."

And for fear of being refused, he said: "I don't know if you remember me . . . I'm Chico . . ."

The name apparently did not mean anything to the producer, who looked at him somewhat doubtfully.

"I'm Chico, Martinelli's dresser. . . ."

The producer's face lit up, and he looked Seu Chico up and down.

"What? Are you he?"

He smiled and shook his hand warmly.

Many years ago it was, when Seu Chico was little more than twenty years old and mad about opera.

With no money for theatre tickets, he thought of becoming the dresser to one of the stars of the theatre-season. He offered his services, but was turned down. He had, however, a friend who worked as the dresser for Martinelli, who was opening the operatic season with "Aida."

On the first night Seu Chico had gone to his friend's house, attacked him like a thief, knocked him down and trussed him to a chair, saying: "I'll come back when 'Aida' is over. . . ."

To make doubly sure he locked him in the room and took away the key. He thus entered the theatre through the stage-door with his friend's pass, and remained in a corner of the stage, listening to the performance.

The worried tenor, believing his dresser had become ill, dressed himself alone, without help. The performance, however, had not finished before Seu Chico felt himself seized, and there, a few feet from him, with a police officer, stood his former friend. Pale with rage, he pointed to him, saying, "That's the man!"

The producer had been present at this scene and had found great amusement at this situation, created by a boy binding his friend to a chair and locking him in, in order to hear an opera from the wings.

"That's him all right. . . ."

The police had found the victim bound from head to foot to a chair and rolling on the floor and yelling.

They thought at first that they were dealing with a burglary or some serious crime. (The police, in order to justify their existence, always think the worst. . . .) As there was a law regarding assaults, Seu Chico was charged with this offence. He tried to explain that he had no intention of doing harm to his friend, but had done what he did in order to hear Martinelli. The producer Biloro decided to close the incident without bringing the matter to a police-court. He fully appreciated the situation, as it was not

the first time in his career that he had met people with a passion for opera, like this boy of twenty years. He felt sure the victim would withdraw his complaint, and so it turned out. The police eventually gave in and left the young man in Biloró's hands. The tenor Martinelli wished to meet him as soon as he heard of the episode. He was delighted with the story and embraced Chico exuberantly, considering the event as one of the greatest acts of homage he had received in his whole career: a young man who had braved prison to hear him sing! He immediately insisted on appointing him his dresser during the rest of the season. The other dresser could do what he liked about it.

During one of his most successful performances, with the Lyrico Theatre bursting with applause, Martinelli had entered the dressing-room and said: "Chico, did you hear? To-night I sang specially for you."

All this had taken place more than twenty years ago, and now Biloró, after this long time, was once again meeting the same Chico, with his hair starting to turn white, but with the same kindly blue eyes.

"What a great surprise, Chico! . . ."

He turned to his group of friends and, telling them he would soon return, he led the tailor by the arm to the foyer, which was empty at that hour, as the audience was already seated, the opera being about to begin.

"What a surprise! How many years is it now?"

"Twenty-five . . ."

"Just think of it! Twenty-five years!"

He asked endless questions, to which Seu Chico answered that he was worried with eight children. The producer enquired why Chico had never paid him a call during those many years.

"I thought perhaps you mightn't remember me. . . ."

Biloró then asked him the purpose of his present call. Did he want anything? Seu Chico told him he had come to ask a favour for a friend, a poor devil with a wonderful



voice who had the misfortune to drink. He was a chorus-singer who had given up his job without explanations. He felt sure the producer knew him : Panizoni.

"He has nowhere to go except to my house," he finished. "I look after him like a brother."

The reply was immediate : "Tell him to report tomorrow at rehearsal at two o'clock. But," Biloro added, "I have no opinion of him at all, but as it's you . . ."

And changing the subject suddenly, pleased after so many years at meeting a link with the past in the person of Seu Chico, with his greying hair, he continued : "D'you remember that night when, ill and hoarse with a sore throat, Martinelli was so unjustly booed by the public? And do you remember two nights later when, singing the same rôle, he was deliriously cheered by the crowd? Do you, Chico?"

"I should say I do . . ." he replied. "On both those nights the poor man wept in his dressing-room. On the night they hissed him, as on all other nights, I left the theatre with him in a horse-cab. I went with him as far as his hotel, seated by his side, and to my dying day I'll never forget that drive, after the hissing, in that old cab, with its little yellow lamp which made Martinelli look yellower and dimmer than ever. . . ."

84

The two girls went through the grounds on tiptoe. It was eight-thirty and Amparo was pushing Luiza ahead of her.

"You wait here, you beast of a girl . . ." whispered the mulatto woman, scared of falling or striking a tree.

Amparo did not hear her. Joaquim was waiting for her at the garden gate. Five minutes and no more, just time to hold her hand, if that. Amparo had suddenly felt an intense longing to see him again, and had begged Luiza to telephone to him to pass by the garden-gate at half-past

eight. Luiza had hesitated. "I see you don't go," she had said in an irritated tone. "All right," and sourly she had added, "And what if I tell Mother I saw you kissing Eurico—and what kisses, more like Francesca Bertini in the films—just behind the big carambola-tree?"

Fearful of being denounced, Luiza had telephoned Joaquim from Seu Lucas' store. On her return she said, "Amparo, I don't much like the way Seu Lucas looked at me . . . in that strange way of his. It strikes me the old man only has nasty thoughts."

The meeting at the garden gate actually lasted longer than five minutes, and neither Amparo nor Luiza noticed footsteps on the stone paths of the garden. When they least expected it, they saw Henrique stealing out like someone in a novel, his hat pulled down almost over his ears. He saw Amparo talking to Joaquim near the street lamp. Both turned pale, with fear of trouble to come. He did not, however, pass close by, but looked at them quite indifferently and walked slowly down Paula Mattos Street. Amparo and Luiza exchanged a quick glance. What could have happened to Henrique?

On the pavement on the other side of the street, Amparo saw Fioravanti, dressed in black, his hat jammed over his ears, hands thrust into his pockets, walking up the street at a slow pace. From time to time he would stop and half turn round, as if to call in an inaudible voice the ghost of Garibaldi following him.

85

Henrique saw Maria do Céu coming towards him alone. "Hello, Maria . . . Good evening. . . ."

She turned round and looked at him.

"Good evening," the girl replied in an indifferent tone.

"Sure you don't remember me?"

"No, sorry. . . . Who are you?" she enquired, smiling.

"'m. . . ."

"Oh, of course . . . you're the friend of . . ."

She hesitated.

"How are you? What are you up to at this hour, my boy?"

Boy? Henrique became embarrassed.

"I came to look for you. . . ."

"To look for me? . . ."

"Yes, ever since that night, I have thought of no one else. . . ."

She took his arm with a caressing gesture, walked along by his side. Men and women passed by in the shadows. Signs flashed over the entrances to bars. She said, "This is all nonsense, you know. . . ." And then in a softer voice asked, "What's your name?"

"Henrique."

"Now, look, Henrique . . . I like people to think of me and to like me . . . but you must promise me something . . . will you? Don't think of me any more. . . . Eighteen, that's how old you are, isn't it?"

Henrique was about to protest, but she interrupted with: "No, at your age one doesn't fall in love with a tired, worn-out body like mine . . . at your age it's just desire. . . ." She sighed. "It's hard, but it's the truth. . . ." She changed her tone.

"Eighteen years. . . . What a lovely age. . . . I actually feel touched at being desired by a boy of eighteen. . . ."

And in a low voice filled with sweetness, she added: "You do want me badly, don't you?"

She led him along quiet streets and in Riachuelo Street, a few steps away, Henrique saw two human shadows in a close embrace. He smiled and thought to himself, "Lovers." The couple approached and revealed themselves as two men. Henrique recognized Lulu in one of them.

Christmas was in the air. Sá Carola, who made the most marvellous sweets and sold them at night from a stand at the corner of Rocio Square and Silva Jardim Street, when she heard of the activities in the tailor's house, complained to Luiza :

"Seu Chico knows I'm a good friend of his. I'm told, though, that he's invented some kind of puppet-show to put my Nativity presentation completely in the shade."

Luiza stuttered : "What an idea ! There's nothing much I'd put past Seu Chico, but not that."

Sá Carola, however, refused to be consoled.

Sá Carola's Nativity Group, with its shepherds, was as well known on the hill as the Sugar Loaf in the city.

Her only son, Herculano, a strapping young fellow who worked in a furniture factory, with his able hands built the set which year after year so greatly impressed Paula Mattos Hill and the neighbourhood. It was a pleasure to view this world in miniature, with its houses, palaces, roads, church steeples as big as one's fist, trees, rivers flowing in beds fashioned from bits of glass, golden paper stars pinned on to a sky of blue gauze. And Herculano's hands, like those of a god, shaped, one by one, lamps, sails of windmills, and lakes, and on the tiny trees placed nests with birds, and on rocks and trunks grouped butterflies and orchids. It was a work of art. It did one's eyes good to see, in this tiny world, numberless shepherds, farmhands, friars, children, princes, soldiers and pages, giving a splash of colour with their gay uniforms and costumes to the roads, doorways and window-sills of the palaces. There was even a doll in a grotesque costume, with a straw hood over its head and a glass eye in its yellow forehead, which monotonously and ceaselessly rang a peal of bells by the side of a fountain. This tinkling added to the noise of the toy electric train which flashed across a corner of the

set, and to the musical clock in its tower in the centre of the dwarf city, as well as to the gurgle of the water of the tiny streams and waterfalls. One felt that Herculano had his soul in his hands when he fashioned the wood, paper, metal or silk into all the objects which filled the picturesque and ingenious set placed in a corner of Sá Carola's dining-room.

"It really seems alive," was the usual comment before the set, with its lights and movement, so carefully carried out by Herculano by means of concealed electric batteries.

In one corner, on a bed of straw in a humble manger, under the eyes of a kneeling Virgin Mary and of a St. Joseph, lay the infant Jesus, between an ox and a little ass wearing a melancholy air. At the entrance to the manger knelt the shepherds, with heads as fair as that of the child in its straw cradle, dressed in skins, bringing in their hands fruit and jars of milk and honey. It was touching to see the loving care with which Herculano had arranged the gauze curtain and the star which lit up with its golden beam the stable where the shepherds smiled in ecstasy at the infant King without a throne.

"Just look at the Three Wise Kings!"

In a corner of the landscape, far away from the manger, the carpenter had placed the procession of the Kings in search of the stable lit by the star. What a procession it was! Not only the three Kings on horseback covered in gold, but also accompanying them were files of soldiers, some in silver helmets and carrying scarlet lances, others unfurling standards with strange devices.

The urchins on the hill took a special delight, from Christmas Day till Twelfth Night, in looking in at Sá Carola's set, attracted as they were by its action, the light and the colours.

What pleased them most, however, was the slow, steady march of the three Kings and their glittering escort along the road, across the little rivers and past avenues of trees and palaces.

While her son, with able hands and his soul in his work, prepared the annual Tableau of the Nativity, Sá Carola rehearsed her group of shepherdesses, which was the pride of the hill. It comprised more than thirty girls, and what hard work it was! From November until January, Sá Carola made sweets as a means of earning her living, but as she had not the time to sell them in person, she arranged with a friend to take her place at her stall during these two months.

The girls filled her house every night with a ceaseless babel of voices, smiles and orders. In one corner, elderly women, the mothers of the shepherdesses, were sewing the coloured dresses covered with lace, stitching a rainbow effect on the hems, bands of flowers and gay beads to go round their necks, and decorating the cheap straw hats with masses of red roses. Endless ribbons around their waists, pinned in bows on budding breasts, and spreading in wide folds over the starched cotton skirts. The little shepherdesses tried on the clothes amid laughter and fun. Herculano himself paid no attention to all this bustle and noise, which drowned the strokes of his hammer and the sound of his shears cutting through wood and metal.

The group did not only consist of the shepherdesses with their crooks and toy lambs, which some carried in their young rounded arms. There was also a group dressed as angels with wings of shimmering tissue, fairies with long false hair over their shoulders and others dressed up as pages, kings, demons and werewolves. Sá Carola gave all the orders. When young, she had been the queen of such a group, and she had bequeathed to her son this hobby of making kings and queens of the humble folk on the hill.

Seu Chico became very upset when he heard of Sá Carola's complaints. What a crazy idea of hers! Nevertheless, without hesitation, in his shirt-sleeves as he was,

he went off through the grounds, crossed the street and clapped his hands outside the old sweet-seller's house.

Sá Carola received him, as always, with smiles and effusiveness. Seu Chico at once stated the reasons for his call. He did not wish to see his old friend going about making baseless remarks. The little theatre was only to open after Carnival time, in April or May, and it was his intention to give a show each month. There were so many people on the hill, chiefly children, who were in need of healthy entertainment. He wanted to give to all the penniless ones the right to hear and see shows which only the rich could afford. It was to be named "Harlequin's Theatre."

"But they told me——"

"Now look here, Sá Carola. I came here to give you even more news. Amparo has always been the 'Silver Star' amongst your shepherdesses. Well, she'll continue in that rôle. In case you should want Gloria for one of your 'angels' you're welcome to her too——"

Sá Carola felt uncomfortable. Seu Chico was really worth his weight in gold, she felt.

"I accept with pleasure."

"Let's shake hands on it."

Before leaving, Seu Chico let her into a secret.

"At the opening of the little theatre we're going to have a surprise, and what a one! The other day I called on Apollonia Pinto.<sup>1</sup> I asked her if she'd care to come and be present at the opening and recite something for the children. . . ."

"You don't say, Seu Chico!"

"She agreed to come. Just think what a sensation. Apollonia Pinto on the hill!"

When Seu Chico had gone, Sá Carola remained for a while at her garden gate, looking up and down the street. Her neighbour at No. 35, who was passing by, asked her :

<sup>1</sup> The grand old lady of the Brazilian stage. Died in 1935.

“ Good day, Sá Carola, what’s on your mind ? ”

But she got no reply, as Sá Carola was ashamed of her thoughts. Might God forgive her ! She was thinking of what a funeral Seu Chico would receive, were he to die. Everyone on the hill owed him favours. He had arranged for lawyers and doctors—had not his neighbour at No. 46 been acquitted through his help ?—and he had stood as godfather at endless baptisms, christenings and marriages. He was always fixing up schools, jobs, and recommending books.

And now, to cap everything, he was bringing the great Apollonia Pinto to the hill !

Sá Carola murmured through her tightly closed lips :

“ When Seu Chico dies, it really will be a swell funeral ! ”

88

Luiza seemed in a state of ecstasy. She was to be the leader of the “ shepherdesses,” and every night, no sooner was her work done than she flew to Sá Carola’s. She sang like none of the others, with a lovely voice that charmed Herculano. Her voice seemed bewitched. Sometimes the other shepherdesses stopped their chorus to hear her.

“ Why, Luiza is like a Yapurú.”<sup>1</sup>

She herself was amused at the remark.

Bur even when she was in the centre of the group, gyrating on her heels and shaking her tambourine, adorned with ribbons of every hue, she would tremble with fear at the thought of what might be awaiting her on her way back across the grounds of her home. This fear had persisted ever since the beginning of the rehearsals, when Eurico had made it a habit to waylay her in the dark. He put his arm round her waist and the two would climb the hill together, holding each other close. Once he had suggested to her, “ Let’s go in here ? ” pointing to a patch of grass

<sup>1</sup> Yapurú. Amazonas bird. When it sings the other birds become quiet in order to listen to him.



hidden amongst trees and rocks. Luiza had refused, as she only had permission from Dona Josefa to stay out till half-past ten, and did not wish to abuse this favour. But Eurico had lost control of himself. He had kissed her on her eyes, her mouth and on her ears. She was terrified. He then started stroking her firm breasts with his hands.

Luiza had murmured, with closed eyes, as in a trance :  
"No."

Eurico's hands continued their caresses.

"No."

"My darling !"

With a quick gesture he had laid her on the grass, stretching himself beside her, covering her face with kisses and running his tongue over her lips.

"No, Eurico, I have . . ."

How Eurico's eyes shone green, like the stars above !

Luiza felt his weight on her. Both remained open-mouthed, embarrassed. Of a sudden Luiza wrenched herself away from his embrace.

"No, Eurico, no."

During her efforts to shake him off, she felt his hand stroking her body beneath her dress.

She got up, flushed and angry. Eurico still attempted to retain her, but the mulatto girl seemed to be possessed of a supernatural strength and repelled him.

"I'll cry out if you go on."

Eurico withdrew in fear.

"So that's how much you care for me ?"

He did not notice Luiza's eyes swimming in tears.

Embracing her tamely, he continued : "It is all very well, Luiza, but you attract me and tempt me, and then you leave me half-way . . ."

His voice went on cruelly : "Never mind. There are plenty of girls about. If you, who pretend to love me, turn me down, Tobias Barreto Street is full of women who fancy me."

Luiza put her hands to her ears as he continued : "You

know me pretty well. You know my intentions are honest. You know I want to marry you, so why all this acting? Never mind, though."

He let her go, took a few steps along the footpath and then turned for a moment. He saw Luiza leaning against a tree, speechless, with tears running down her cheeks. Without taking any further notice of her he walked on slowly towards the house.

89

Imaculata sat one night practising her piano. Her hands pained her, after sewing all day, and considerable force of will was required to enable her to concentrate, owing to the noise caused by the erection of the little theatre. Her piano teacher, an exacting Spaniard, had declared her almost perfect, with a quick mind and a sound technique. No one else knew how well she could play, nor had she ever received praise. Was it perhaps because there was no longer room in the world for souls like hers?

Only on one night had something different occurred. Rehearsals had been going on in the workroom, and in the living-room she could hear the sound of hammering and her father giving orders. She had been playing somewhat aimlessly on her piano, which had been placed in her brothers' large bedroom. Her head was awl with her thoughts, and in vain she attempted to find oblivion in her music. Every note struck led her mind back to Zacarias. In order to charm and enchant the painter with the letters she wrote to him, she spent her time reading all the books on art which her father possessed and thus became intimate with the lives, works and names of painters all over the world.

Her style was not particularly brilliant, although she had always won distinction and praise for her work in examinations. Obsessed with the wish to express clearly what she felt with a minimum of words—she never wrote anything

other than letters—she improved her style by her reading and even copied the methods of the authors who appeared to her the simplest and the deepest. Zacarias' image was before her continuously. She kept locked in a drawer of her cupboard a scrapbook in which she pasted press-cuttings referring to him. One night, she who was so timid, so reserved, so insignificant, became animated in Zacarias' presence, and both remained for over an hour discussing the problem of chiaroscuro in painting. Fluently she spoke of light and shade and other matters of technique, till suddenly the painter stopped in the middle of the conversation to say :

“Who was it now, who spoke to me only a short time ago, in your own words, on this very matter?”

Imaculata reddened. She remembered suddenly how, carried away by the problem they were discussing, she had studied the subject and had afterwards, as usual, written her views to the artist. Supposing he discovered the secret of those letters? What would be the use? She preferred to love him thus humbly and in silence. She would have liked him to have the illusion of being loved by someone who was his social superior, some rich, cultured and travelled woman. With what care had Imaculata purchased for these letters the most expensive notepaper. The illusion must be maintained, for she felt sure that Zacarias, like all his kind, required this silent devotion.

“Strange!” persisted the painter. And cracking his fingers, he added : “It was in a letter I received some days ago . . . it spoke on the same subject.” And, with the purpose of impressing his hearers that the writer was a girl, he continued : “A letter from one of my girl friends. She writes constantly. A superior kind of woman——”

And warming up, he finished with : “Superior and lovely. She writes to me every week——”

Imaculata breathed happily, for was he not giving to the anonymous writer those qualities that she most desired—a superior and lovely woman?

After this fragment of conversation, Zacarias had gone off to attend the rehearsal of the little theatre.

Alone, Imaculata took refuge in her piano. She opened it, and the shadowed room took on the colours of her music.

Suddenly she thought she heard someone opening the door and closing it again behind him. Her heart beat furiously. It must be the painter, she felt. Of course, he had guessed that those needle-scarred hands of hers were those which had written to him weekly, merely by hearing her play. She went on with her music, but nothing stirred. She closed her eyes. Another moment and she would surely feel the painter's long fingers touching her shoulders. No need for them to reveal themselves to each other by words. The mystery continued for a few minutes. The unknown person must be hidden in the shadows. She stopped playing, and awaited his approach.

In a low voice she said chokingly :

“ Who's there ? ”

There was no reply.

Again she enquired : “ Who's there ? ”

She swung her stool around. She was alone. In the neighbouring room the painter was giving orders regarding the lighting of the stage.

It was not only the baker who was giving trouble.

It came to the ears of Dona Josefa that her husband was again behindhand with the rent, and three months at that. Lucas it was, who first gave her the bad news, as agent to the landlord. One day, as Dona Josefa was going out to visit a sick friend, and passed by the store, the old Portuguese called to her and confidentially told her the situation. Seu Chico must manage somehow. The landlord was in a rage, and, should her husband not settle the

arrears quickly, he would be obliged to evict. Dona Josefa listened to him with surprise. It all seemed so vague to her. Where could her husband have put the money for the rent, which was always considered sacred? She could understand the baker's bill becoming larger and larger, but the rent money! It was true that money was always so short. . . . Apart from the rent, there were the grocer and the butcher to pay. Anything left over scarcely covered the cost of half-soling the shoes of their eight children, of injections for Lucio and special lessons for Henrique. What a fight it had always been! Imaculata and Henrique helped, Gloria gave what she could, and even Amparo, whose only thought was of marrying Joaquim as soon as possible, lent a hand to Imaculata in stitching waistcoats, in order to increase the family income. She herself performed miracles in the kitchen. But, God be her witness, money seemed to have wings.

During the whole of dinner, Dona Josefa could only think of what Lucas had told her, and she was tortured by a terrible worry and curiosity at the same time. The dinner went off as gaily as ever, and for once discussion of the war was not the chief topic, as the apprentices and Seu Chico had their thoughts entirely on the little theatre. Lucio appeared thinner on the eve of his examinations for passing from the first school year to the second. Henrique was bolting his food, for he had little time for studying and memorizing the various subjects of his final examinations. Gloria-Helena never ceased lamenting that Dona Chiquinha spent her fortune on dogs. Didn't they think it was a shame?

Dona Josefa, who was serving, could not get out of her head the threats of the baker and Lucas' remarks: "If Seu Chico doesn't pay within a week, the landlord will evict him."

Seven days . . . nine hundred milreis. Perhaps in less time than that, they might not be having bread at meals; perhaps within a week the dining-table would no longer be

standing in the middle of the room, under the lace lampshade knitted by Amparo's clever hands.

Perhaps, in seven days, the table, chairs, chests of drawers, beds and the rest of the furniture might be thrown out into the middle of the street.

It would not be the first time that an eviction had taken place on the hill—nor would it be the last.

There had always been one basic principle in the family, though . . . the rent must be paid to date. It was she who kept and held back with care the money for the rent, which she handed over at the end of the month to her husband, who took it to the landlord personally in the city, or paid it over to Lucas. On what could Chico have spent it all, she wondered? For the first time in almost twenty years of married life, a suspicion crossed her mind. Of course, her husband had a mistress, for only on a woman could all that money have been spent: nine hundred milreis! Loyally she tried to put the thought out of her mind, but still the idea persisted as to how and when he could have met the other woman. It was true that occasionally he did go out, but always in the company of her children, either to theatres, concerts, exhibitions or the movies. Her husband himself always wore old, worn suits, although these were always clean and looked new. He had not had a new suit made for over three years. It was true, of course, that he spent a bit on daily and weekly papers and on second-hand books. But all these expenses bore no proportion to three months of rent; nine hundred milreis! Her children had no toys, and their clothes were made either by Seu Chico or Sá-Virginia out of pieces left over or samples. The classes Henrique held helped him to buy books and to pay for his lessons. Professor Liro's lessons cost little, and the money Gloria-Helena received for reading paid for them as well as the milkman's and greengrocer's accounts.

"Mother, come and sit down here," said Chico, pointing to a corner of the bed.

She yielded and sat down on its edge.

Seu Chico then took her hands and asked her : " What's up, eh ? "

As she refused to speak, the husband went on : " I know. Old Lucas spoke to me as well. That's what is on your mind, isn't it ? "

She shook her head, grief-stricken.

" Mother, I've been deceiving you . . . "

" Chico ! "

He would not let her speak.

" The money for the rent . . . I . . . "

He had the appearance of a boy caught in a piece of mischief.

" I . . . "

He became confused.

" Chico, for heaven's sake, you don't have to tell me."

" Why, what do you think the reason for it is ? Look here. I told you a friend had given me the planks for the stage, and lamps and all the other fittings for the little theatre. Well, I was lying."

He lowered his voice, and looked as one of his boys did when they were threatened with punishment.

" Mother, I spent the rent money on all this madness."

Dona Josefa gave a sigh of relief. It was better having the money spent in this way.

" I lied, I confess. I had made up my mind that our lads should have a real theatre of their own. That's how . . . " He did not finish, as he felt the pressure of her hand.

" All right, Chico, the matter is at an end. I know all."

She rose and started undressing automatically.

Seu Chico continued : " I'll fix it up to-morrow. I'll ask Doctor Viana for a loan."

" How and when do you propose repaying, though, Chico ? "

" Some time after Christmas."

" But how ? "

Maria do Céó appeared at the corner of Mem-de-Sá Avenue and Maranguape Street. She arrived late, but after all she had arrived.

Henrique approached and spoke to her. She was an hour late and it was almost midnight.

"Silly boy . . . !"

Maria do Céó, however, appeared to be in a hurry.

"You'll excuse me, won't you? I'm in a hellish hurry, though, as I've a customer waiting."

"But . . ."

She started walking away, just as she had arrived, with short quick steps.

Henrique followed.

"Maria do Céó, what's all this?"

He lowered his voice.

"How can you leave me like this? Hadn't we fixed it all up yesterday? I see what it is . . . you're already bored . . . after ten days."

The girl smiled.

"Ten days? Well, don't you think that's enough time to get bored?"

They stopped by a baker's shop with its smell of fresh bread.

She turned to him coldly: "You thought our affair would last more than ten days? Look, my boy, I was once your age."

She stroked his face in a rapid caress.

"Our affair has actually lasted too long'. . . ten nights. . . . At first I thought you good-looking and young, so very young. . . . But . . ."

Seeing him so affected, she changed her tone:

"Don't think badly of me. Think of me as a woman who was yours for ten nights. You're only a baby after all. But you'll have a big future! There'll be endless women in your life. Promise me one thing, will you?"



And smile. Never mix me up with the other women that will come into your life, will you? "

She stretched out her hand.

"We'll be friends, won't we? Don't have too bad an opinion of me. You're still a student. . . ."

What was she trying to insinuate? Henrique reddened, his vanity offended. So she no longer wanted him, because he couldn't pay? For a moment he had an impulse to spit in her face, but managed to control himself.

He watched her going away, as the Lapa church struck twelve.

92

The school year was drawing to a close.

Lucio was pleased with himself. During the year he had been unable, through anæmia, which caused him periodic crises of weakness, to attend many of the classes. He had therefore not been obliged to pass his second period examinations. Nevertheless, he had got through them with top marks, in the first grade, just like the others, the stronger boys.

In another week he would be free from school till March. How marvellous! He had few pleasant memories either of the school itself or of the teachers. Of the latter his only friend had been D. João Baptista. Three months' holiday! No, he felt he couldn't let the time pass without visiting his friend, who tended the roses in the cloisters and who had given him a book with blank pages to write verses in. He would be going constantly to the convent. Perhaps every Sunday for Mass and communion. D. João Baptista was always asking him: "Well, how many pieces of poetry have you written yet in the book I gave you?" Lucio had not known what to reply. It seemed to him almost a sacrilege to write his poems in such a beautiful book, which was a poem in itself.

Lucio stopped at the gate to the playground. One of

the bigger boys passed him and deliberately stamped on his foot. Lucio felt the shock of this brutality and choked with anger. He decided, however, to ignore the lad's evil intention, and, leaning against the wall of the courtyard, watched the boys at play, hopping, running and turning somersaults to the accompaniment of yells and cat-calls. A few minutes later, his assailant, who was almost twice as tall as Lucio, came up to him again. Lucio made up his mind to move away, but felt himself seized by the coat.

"Where are you off to?" the boy asked, shaking Lucio's skinny body.

"Leave me alone," replied Lucio.

"Just look at the little darling. . . . 'Leave me alone,' he says." The boy sneeringly imitated Lucio's voice. Lucio felt as if a veil was beginning to cover his eyes. Then, as strong hands hurled him against the wall, he heard: "Well, stay there, or I'll smash your face in for you, you son of a whore."

It was too much to be borne. The blood surged to his head as he recollected all the humiliations, insults and miseries he had suffered these many months. All this he had put up with, but at least they should respect his mother. With an energy unknown to him before, he stepped back, freed himself and leapt at his aggressor like a madman, with clenched fists. Lucio, who had never previously made the slightest act of retaliation, instinctively copied the habits of the street urchins on the hill. He ran behind his school-mate who had insulted his mother and threw his arms round his neck. The latter struck him hard and Lucio staggered. Before falling, however, he had seized his assailant by the knees and threw him hard on to the ground. Clutching each other, they rolled over, spitting with rage, striking and clawing each other. The big boy hit Lucio hard on the nose, and blood started flowing. A group of delighted schoolmates formed a ring around them, urging them on.

"Let him have it, mother's darling."

"That's the stuff, my lad."

The courtyard was soon in an uproar, and the voice of the friar who was acting as prefect could be heard calling for order.

"Just another punch, my pretty."

"Show him you're a real man."

"Is he, though?"

The friar, a German, with a head as bald as a billiard ball, intervened amongst the boys who were watching:

"Lucio! Pedro Paulo!"

Both the boys rose. Pedro Paulo held his head low, but in Lucio Marianni's sickly eyes burnt the light of challenge.

"What happened?"

Pedro Paulo attempted to explain, but the friar cut him short with "Follow me."

The two boys passed through the courtyard, their clothes soiled with sand and blood, and followed the friar-prefect, under the eyes of their astonished fellows.

As Lucio was about to enter the friar's study, he felt someone patting him on the back. It was Jack, the friend he had lost and who cut him two months ago on his return to school. They had during that time merely greeted each other, but, as it was impossible to ignore each other's existence, seated as they were on the same bench, they had exchanged occasional trivial remarks. Lucio could not forgive the examination that Jack's mother had insisted on.

Jack gave him the look he formerly used to.

"Good for you, Lucio, bravo."

Lucio, however, hardly heard him.

The friar refused to accept Lucio's explanation, as he could not believe that a boy like Pedro Paulo, coming from a good family, the son of a senator and nephew to an ambassador, with a name that appeared on a hundred pages of Brazilian history and had streets named after it,

could insult anyone. How simple-minded was this friar! Or was he merely cynical?

Pedro Paulo smiled in satisfaction.

The friar kept on insisting . . . Surely Lucio was mistaken . . . what were the insults he had heard?

Lucio reddened. He had never pronounced such words, although he understood their foul meaning. How could the friar, who, in spite of his dress—and the cross of gold that hung on its purple cord from his neck was no more than a coarse German—insist on his repeating such filth? No—he could not get himself to say them. . . .

“Well, come on! What were they?”

“But, Don . . .”

“Out with them,” replied the friar, staring at him, his eyes clouded with anger. “I rather fancy you’ve made all this up.”

Lucio shook with indignation. This German priest was like all the others of his race, invaders of countries, men who sacked towns, raped women and cut off little children’s hands. He had a cheek, this German priest!

“I made it up, did I? Well, I’ll tell you. He called me a son of a whore.”

There was a short silence. Pedro Paulo twisted his hands, his eyes lowered.

“What? Pedro Paulo said that?” roared the friar in his sibilant foreign accent.

Lucio looked at him amazed.

“My opinion is,” continued the friar, “that it’s just a lie of yours, Lucio. A boy like Pedro Paulo wouldn’t be able to say such things. He wouldn’t be used to it.”

Lucio felt his legs giving way. So this priest didn’t believe him, and for what reason? He was taking it out of Lucio because his father was behindhand with his monthly school payments. He felt that it had not been worth while studying and sacrificing himself, trying to add dignity by his work to the school and his country. He hardly recog-

nized the presence of the priest, who seemed to fade away amongst the furniture and the high walls.

"I myself think, Lucio, that it was you who insulted Pedro Paulo. Wasn't that it?"

He came nearer to poor terrified Lucio, his face blazing with rage.

"Just one of those insults picked up on the hill, wasn't it? Things that you only learn on that hill you live on."

He did not succeed in finishing his outburst, as Lucio, completely transformed by anguish and revolted by this treatment, yelled out in the priest's face:

"I didn't lie . . . I didn't."

"Silence."

"I won't be silent."

"Silence, I tell you."

"I refuse. You're unjust."

"Silence, I repeat."

"You're just a foreigner, a German."

"What's that?"

"So only a boy from the hill can say filthy words, can he?"

"Be silent!"

Lucio was now beside himself.

"Well, in that case I'd like to tell you both, Pedro and you are two sons of whores."

And foaming with rage, his eyes brimming with tears, he hastily opened the door of the friar's study, without noticing that behind it was a dense mass of boys eaves-dropping. Running like a madman, he crossed the corridor, reached the gallery, flew down the stairs which led to the courtyard and entered the nave of the abbey. He only stopped running on entering the sacristy, where he found D. João Baptista patiently washing the altar lace and linen in the marble font.

"What's the matter?" asked the friar, as he watched him enter in so strange a manner, panting heavily, with his cheeks wet from the tears that streamed from his eyes.

Lucio, however, was unable to say a word, but only sobbed without ceasing.

94

Before eleven—classes began punctually at that hour—the courtyard in front of the college was completely peaceful. Usually the students, as they arrived, went to their own rooms or waited in the corridors for the bell to strike eleven.

That morning the whole college seemed quite upside down. Something extraordinary was going to happen.

They were wagering : “ Will he come ? I doubt it.”

“ I bet five thousand reis to five thousand he won’t.”

“ Settled.”

They were all discussing what had happened.

“ I wouldn’t have believed it.”

“ Nor I. He’s so soft.”

“ With those cod-fish eyes.”

“ And a poet too.”

“ Who would have thought it ? ”

They were getting excited :

“ I heard it was Pedro Paulo whom he insulted first.”

“ It was.”

“ How could the friar behave like that ? ”

“ Why not ? Isn’t he a German ? ”

Suddenly the friar-prefect ceased to be a religious man whose kingdom was in heaven. He was a German. He was one of the millions on whom the country had declared war. Unconsciously all the children who, with rare exceptions, had been severely punished by him—even though they deserved punishment—considered themselves unjustly treated. They profited by the occasion to increase the noise.

Those of the fifth year were saying :

“ That friar ought to learn a lesson.”

“ The old rogue ! Just like all of them in his country.”

"If I were Lucio, I would have said more."

"Why didn't you say it during your five years at school?"

"Because I didn't have the opportunity."

"You didn't have it?"

They laughed.

Those of the fourth year were saying:

"Is it true that he insulted the priest's mother?"

"Insulted?"

"You heard?"

"I did not hear, but those who were behind the door heard everything."

"What if he did?"

Amongst those of the third year could be heard:

"Don't you think that Lucio deserves an ovation?"

"What if we asked for the German's dismissal?"

Amongst those of the second year:

"They tell me that Lucio is going to be expelled."

"What, expelled?"

"Don't say it."

And a boy with a freckled face added:

"I doubt whether they will do that to a Brazilian."

"Remember one thing, if Lucio suffers anything, we shall go on strike."

"What is a strike?"

"Don't you know what a strike is?"

"Do you?"

The pupil who launched the idea of a strike said:

"As for me, I don't know either, but we'll have one anyway."

Amongst those of the first year:

"I never thought Lucio capable of so much."

"He has talent, he even writes in the newspapers."

"That sickly air of his is a sign of intelligence. My father told me that poets begin early and finish early."

"I say, I bet you don't know what I heard yesterday."

"What?"

"Lucio is poor."

"Is he?"

"That's why he works so hard. His father is a tailor and has a very large family."

"All his books are second-hand."

One older than the rest added: "I'm ashamed to have teased him so often with nasty remarks."

Ten minutes to eleven.

"Will Lucio come?"

Nine minutes to eleven.

A perspiring boy appeared in the college gateway. It was Jack. He had the look of one who brings bad news. He ran in the direction of the group of first-year pupils.

"What is it?"

"Speak out, man!"

He found his tongue.

He had heard through D. João Baptista that Lucio was to be expelled, and all because he had had the pluck to tell that shameless German a few home truths.

He finished by shouting: "Down with the German."

One voice, two, tens of voices shouted suddenly:

"Down with the German. Down with the German."

It ceased to be the case of a badly treated boy which preoccupied them. Now it was a question of national pride.

"How is it that an enemy (and the speaker stressed the word 'enemy' with gusto) has the nerve to insult a Brazilian?"

"Down with the German."

Seven minutes to eleven.

There was a movement. What was happening? All were standing about in groups. "What? It was not possible."—"Don't say it!"—"If that should happen, it would be a shame."—"I have always said that we're ruled by foreigners."

"But Lucio does not come!"

"I bet the Rector has already sent a warning to his family."



Six minutes to eleven.

More shouts in the courtyard : " Down with the German. Down with the German."

D. Luís, so good and so serene, appeared in the entrance-gate of the college. He came to see what was happening. But in his glance was a good and kind expression, as if he wished to say that he was on their side. He had always detested the rude and violent methods of the prefect. Don Luís stopped only for a moment in the doorway, but long enough to hear an excited group shouting threateningly :

" Down with the German ! "

" Brazil for the Brazilians ! "

There was an unaccustomed bustle in the college. Teachers appeared at the windows with an enquiring air. What was the meaning of the boys' agitation and excited gestures ?

Professor Piragibe, with his handsome head, was smiling. (This anger against the German prefect showed that there was the same spirit of justice and of liberty in the younger generation as when he was twenty.)

Four minutes to eleven. The bell would soon call them to class, and Lucio had not come. If Lucio did not come, everything would be spoiled.

At that moment, with his bag on his back as usual, Lucio appeared at the bottom of the yard coming slowly from the side of the Arsenal. He must have been tired. He looked pale, perhaps paler than usual. He stopped at the top of the ascent. Never had he seen so many of his school-mates together. It was not a national event, there was not going to be a parade. Lucio had slept badly and had not told his family what had happened. All the way from his home to the college he had prepared himself for the questioning he was going to face from the Headmaster. He was ready for anything, even for expulsion from the college.

Suddenly a voice shouted :

" Bravo, Lucio ! "

" Long live Lucio ! "

Three minutes to eleven.

His name was shouted like those of the players in a football match.

"Lucio !"

"Long live Lucio !"

A fifth-year boy, already showing signs of an incipient beard, bellowed in his face :

"Down with the German !"

Lucio found himself surrounded. They were embracing him. He might have been a candidate for the presidency of the Republic.

"Well done !" they cried.

"Bravo !"

"Why ?" enquired Lucio, embarrassed.

They crowded round him and praised his courage. He had more courage than all of them put together. He had given a good lesson to the "enemy."

Two minutes to eleven.

Lucio managed to make his way to the middle of the courtyard. The same wave of boys followed him, all shouting and pushing. It was like a festival.

One minute to eleven. The bell is about to ring. But nobody is thinking of classes. An orator makes himself heard. (It would not be a Brazilian demonstration without orators.) Now all the college windows are packed with curious teachers. They watch smilingly the demonstration of displeasure against the prefect. D. João Baptista, at the door of the college, fingers his rosary of large black beads.

The bell rings. It is eleven o'clock. Lucio is hauled along. They arrive at the porch. The same shouts.

They repeat the words of the orator : "If the German appears, strike him, strike him !"

There is confusion at the entrance. The masters shout : "Order ! Silence !"

Lucio is surprised, astonished, frightened, as he reaches his bench in his classroom, where his hundred and ten colleagues receive him with applause as if he were a hero.

Even the drawing master, who is already at his desk, the excellent Seu Braz, receives him standing, much moved, clapping his hands. Lucio does not know what to do. All his schoolmates must be mistaken—he had only defended his mother's name, nothing more.

Seu Braz had lost one of his sons as a volunteer on the battlefields of France. He said to him: "Well done, Lucio, you have shown a German what he deserves."

He was too moved to go on.

An uproar filled the room.

Someone rose at the back of the room and proceeded towards Lucio's desk. It was Pedro Paulo with his head down. He had promised the crowd to apologize in public and now manfully kept his word. He approached Lucio and said some words of excuse. He held out his hand to him. Jack, who had thought out the scene, was very satisfied. Lucio—what would he do? He had already forgotten about Pedro Paulo and his stupidity. He forgot quickly. He was like Seu Chico! He had no time for senseless rancour. He took the offered hand. A roar of applause was heard.

Suddenly D. Luís appeared in the doorway. Immediately, as if by magic, silence reigned.

The Headmaster called: "Lucio Marianni."

The child rose.

An order was heard: "Come to my study, I want to talk to you."

D. Luís had already disappeared. Lucio got up and followed him.

Ten minutes passed and whispers began to run around the room.

"What do you think is delaying Lucio?"

"In my opinion they have already expelled him."

The most disconcerting questions trembled in the air.

The anxiety lasted a quarter of an hour. Then Lucio returned, paler than ever. He sat down on his seat, and his hands were trembling. Seu Braz could no longer dis-

cipline those one hundred and ten boys. All, moved by one impulse, came from their seats and ran towards Lucio. "What happened?"

The child did not know how to convey what the Headmaster had said to him. He was not treated harshly, as he had expected. D. Luís had merely begged him to be less violent on another occasion. When he felt humiliated or offended, he, like all the other boys, should come and tell him. What were tribunals for? In order that men should not take justice into their own hands.

"But, did he talk of expulsion?" asked Jack.

"No."

Seu Braz was giving orders: "Everyone to his seat!" The poor man became hoarse. Nobody paid attention to him.

D. Luís appeared again in the doorway—as if to ask for silence and order without even saying a word. He remained until the end of the class, near the blackboard, in his long cassock, his hands crossed over the crucifix on his breast.

The silence was so intense that one could hear the pencil and charcoal on the broad sheets of cardboard on the desks, where young hands were trying to draw an apple that Seu Braz had placed on his table.

The German friar did not appear on the playground that day. Nor did he on those which followed. The pupils had won.

The "Harlequin Theatre" was rehearsing animatedly when Aunt Branca appeared. She had come unexpectedly. It was not her habit to appear in Paula Mattos at night. What could have happened?

Aunt Branca had gone to see Dona Chiquinha on that November afternoon, and had stayed to dinner. The old

woman had told her, among other news of the neighbourhood, of the little theatre that Seu Chico was preparing in his drawing-room. Aunt Branca got angry. She knew nothing. She knew nothing at all. Her brother, her sister-in-law and her nephews had kept their secret well.

For that reason no sooner had Aunt Branca finished her dinner than she hurried to her brother's house to find out what was happening.

As soon as Gilberto saw his aunt he ran to put a broom behind the door. But the miracle did not work.

Seu Chico excused himself about the little theatre :

" We wanted to give you a surprise." Aunt Branca, for once, did not complain. It was quite a change for her. She pretended not to mind. She had come, she said, because she was near. " Don't you wish to be present at the rehearsal of the third scene ? " asked her brother.

Aunt Branca did not reply. Seu Chico then quickly went on to tell her the plot of the play. His ideas, Lucio's verses, scenery by Zacarias, rehearsals by Panizoni, Lulu's music. All in the family. He was going to create the first children's theatre in the town.

But the players were already on the stage—Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin. Amparo was Columbine, Lucio played Harlequin and Eurico was Pierrot. Professor Liro started the rehearsal. (Since Panizoni had returned to his place in the chorus of the Republic Theatre, Professor Liro had taken on the job of stage-director.) All of a sudden Aunt Branca rose : " But this is shameless, it's immoral ! "

All looked at her astonished. What did she mean ? Immaculata remained motionless, with hands pressed to the keyboard.

Aunt Branca was red with anger.

Dona Josefa said to her quietly : " What is it, Branca ? " and added, coldly : " Where is the immorality ? "

Aunt Branca did not listen. She was denouncing what she had witnessed. In her eyes it was sinful.

Seu Chico became exasperated.

"In my house I am the one who commands. Do you hear?"

"Chico!" interrupted Dona Josefa.

Seu Chico went on, with raised fists:

"Go to the devil, you pest."

Aunt Branca turned pale. She was almost the colour of the pearls around her thin neck. "You will pay for that, you ungrateful one, you will pay," she muttered, in a voice charged with venom. Then, shrugging her shoulders, without looking back, she went out of the room. Her infuriated brother followed her, repeating: "Go to the devil, you pest, go to the devil!"

96

On the same night Luiza, on her way home from the rehearsals of the "Shepherdesses," met Eurico, who was waiting for her, hidden in a tuft of bushes at the side of the orchard. The night was dark. Eurico's eyes were shining.

As usual he pulled her close to him, and his arms encircled her so that she could hardly walk. "Leave me, Eurico."

"A moment only."

"What do you want? It is already so late."

"Half-past ten—you call that late? Dearest, why not sit here for five minutes? I promise . . ."

The girl sat beside him on some stones covered with ivy. Eurico's eyes shone greener than the grass. He whispered something in her ear. "It's all your fault."

The girl trembled.

"Yes, your fault, Luiza. You say that you like me and yet you refuse to be mine. For what are you keeping what should be mine? For the earth to eat?"

It was cruel. It was crueller still when he insisted on telling her the story: "You ran from me, Luiza. I needed a woman. I picked on the wrong one. . . ."

"Eurico, please!"

"Now, I'm ill . . ."

There was silence. Luiza covered her ears with her hands. She did not want to hear.

Eurico embraced her.

"But soon I will be cured. I have been going to the clinic every morning."

His voice changed.

"Look, Luiza, when I'm all right, will you be mine?"

She did not stir.

"We'll get married one day."

She felt stunned. Eurico was ill, suffering from one of those illnesses which make men blind or paralysed, and it was her fault. He repeated: "Do you promise to be mine when I am cured?"

What could she say but: "I promise."

Eurico kissed her on the lips.

97

Henrique looked at the little calendar. Only two more weeks and his examinations would begin. He was certain that he would pass in every subject. Soon he would be at a university. But when would he earn some real money to help his father? When? He was tired of being a student. Even Maria do Céó had said to his face: "You are only a student."

He was determined to forget her. He thought that he had already forgotten her. But her image would come quietly between him and the pages of the difficult books that he was studying, the theorems of algebra and geometry that he was trying to learn by heart.

Two more weeks and then, good-bye, preparatory classes!

On that afternoon he had seen in the papers that at the beginning of January an entrance examination for officials of the Bank of Brazil would be held. Why not enrol? He was well up in all the required subjects. He might even gain one of the first places amongst the candidates

and, eventually, a position of some sort, with high remuneration. Why should he not try? During dinner he had hinted at the idea of entering the competition, and what had happened? Imaculata's face had remained motionless and Seu Chico didn't say a word of approval or disapproval.

That evening, from his study, he had heard the row between his father and the rich aunt and enjoyed it.

Decidedly, whether his father wished it or not, Henrique would sit for the examination for the Bank of Brazil.

98

Lucio was in bed with an open book before him, but he was unable to read. Thoughts of the college, the friars and his school friends would not go out of his head. How everything had changed! He was going to finish the year with different ideas from those he had had at the beginning. His school friends were not as bad as he had thought. Perhaps if he were more accessible, if he had not so much in his head, he would never suffer anything. Why had he not adapted himself in ten months to school life? The other boys liked open-air life, sports, lurid language. Well, why not?

Jack was right: "If one wishes to be happy one should not spoil the happiness of others."

Lucio had said nothing about what had happened in the college, as he had always hidden from his parents and brothers the humiliations and insults he suffered. All that seemed already as far away as a bad dream.

It was a week since they had begun to treat him differently. The change was only due to the fact that instead of showing strong fists, like Jack, he had shown his tongue. The world was crazy. Was not Germany overrunning countries and shooting millions—an example of the use of brute-force? When the strong were not sinking ships and bombarding cities, they were doing worse. These ideas



were not his. From where had he got them? He remembered that it was from a paper Zacarias had left.

The world was for the strong. Even that night, Seu Chico, poor and humble, had shown, by employing violence, that he was as important as Aunt Branca with her car waiting at the door and with ropes of pearls round her neck.

Lucio shut the book. Occasionally he found it a pleasure to indulge in aimless thoughts. It is certain that he found it very interesting to finish the year as a hero. For the first time he had experienced the sensation of being listened to, not criticized and made ridiculous.

99

No one thought any more about Aunt Branca on the following morning.

Chico was out. Before going out he had said, "I'm going to pay the rent."

Dona Josefa looked at him astonished. How and when had he got the money? He guessed the doubt that lurked behind the gentle eyes of his wife.

"Don't you believe it? All right, when I come back I will show you the receipts."

Then Dona Josefa saw him go down to the orchard, and remained still, by the dining-room window, looking at the sunshine, like gold-dust on the trees.

She liked at times to rest thus—leaning her elbows on the window-sill. Gilberto and Margarida were at school. Helio was playing on the terrace, dipping his hands in the water-tank. Gloria was getting ready for Professor Liro's class. Henrique at that hour, even with the nearness of the examinations, was still teaching in the school in Oriente Street. Dona Josefa, however, as she watched the sunshine playing on Helio's hands, which appeared to be trying to capture the light and to dip it into the water-tank, wondered how Chico had raised money to pay three months' back rent. All the trouble had arisen through that madness of

wishing to construct the first little theatre for children in the town. Imaculata, who was passing near, called her.

"Mother."

She turned. The girl approached. "Have you heard about Zacarias?"

Dona Josefa had heard nothing. The painter had been impressed by the story of the overdue rent, told him by Henrique. Zacarias knew what an order to quit meant. Hadn't the bailiffs dragged the furniture, and even the bed, of the consumptive at No. 25 Paula Mattos Street into the falling rain?

Zacarias then resolved to hunt up an old customer for his pictures. He brought the man to his studio and said he needed money and was in a terrible fix. The buyer was only interested in one picture, that of the artist's mother. Imaculata was moved as she told the story.

"You know, Mother, Zacarias always said he would never sell the picture of his dead mother at any price."

Dona Josefa was all ears.

"But to save Father, Zacarias sacrificed it. He sold the picture and brought the money for the rent last night."

Dona Josefa's thoughts were far away. She was thinking of that portrait of a tranquil woman, madonna-like, sad-looking, with a halo of white hair on her forehead.

Seu Chico had not yet returned when the car used by Aunt Branca stopped before the gate. Aunt Branca did not emerge from it as usual. Only the chauffeur jumped out, clothed in his grey uniform with gold buttons.

He was carrying a letter in his gloved hands. Dona Josefa, who was in the kitchen preparing the lunch, saw him through the window, which overlooked the whole orchard. Her heart began beating wildly, as she guessed what it might be. She did not wait for her husband to read the letter, which needed no reply. She had already read it

from beginning to end when she heard the car moving off, scattering the stones of Paula Mattos Street.

The letter carried poison in every sentence, in every word. It was not signed by Aunt Branca, although it was she who had inspired it, but by her son-in-law, a rich person, owner of palaces, who had even given the Cardinal a chapel as a present, in the quarter where he lived. He was claiming from Chico the payment in twenty-four hours of an old promissory note of two contos of reis, borrowed a few years ago.

Dona Josefa knew all about that debt. When Helio was born, in order to pay the doctor and for the medicines, Seu Chico had run to his moneyed nephew. His relative gave him the two contos he needed, and Seu Chico had signed that promissory note, the first of his life.

"In less than a year I will redeem it," he said.

That happened four years ago.

The nephew had never reclaimed anything, certainly. But Seu Chico used to say to him constantly, when he visited him : "When you least expect it, I will liquidate my debt."

(Naturally it did not pass unnoticed by the rich nephew that the frequent visits of Chico were not really for him, but in order to see the collection of Italian paintings that filled the walls of his palace.)

Chico used to say : "He is a good man, our nephew, Josefa."

Dona Josefa thought that her husband was going to tell her that her rich nephew, loaded with decorations (with the war, his name was in the papers : gifts for the Allies, cheques for the Red Cross, money for the orphans and widows of the victims) and a friend of Cardinal Arcoverde, had torn the promissory note to pieces. She had dreams of receiving it as a present for herself and her children. Their nephew could do that easily. His charity helped hospitals, colleges, crèches. People whispered that the Pope was going to make him a marquis or something similar, because he had received from him a present of precious

stones that was worth a few millions of liras. But Chico immediately disillusioned her. "Good man, our nephew. Every time I speak about the promissory note, he says, 'Don't worry. . . . Don't worry.' . . ."

The letter which Dona Josefa held in her hands destroyed her last illusions.

To whom could they appeal now? Who would lend them some money? Where could she go? To whom could she run for help? To pay the rent Zacarias had sacrificed his most beautiful picture, the one he loved most, the one that preserved for ever the sweet and lovely face of his dead mother. Perhaps Fioravanti would help? But the shoemaker only had his collection of records, and that Chico, in a difficult hour, had already taken to a pawnshop. Who would be able to save them from the assault of their nephew, protector of so many hospitals, and friend of the Cardinal? She trembled and began to cry quietly, with the letter in her fat and shiny hands. Imaculata, who had seen her aunt's chauffeur appear and disappear, wished to know what had happened.

"What is it?"

She took the letter from her mother, who was crying, read it and said quietly: "Don't cry, Mother."

And stroking her whitened hair, she said:

"My piano is worth much more than that."

101

Dona Josefa did not wait for the return of her husband. She dressed herself quickly. She put on her black frock—the only one she had for going out—and then she called Imaculata.

"When your father returns, do not tell him anything about the letter. I do not wish him to be worried. I am going to see . . ." She became calmer. "Tell him that I went to church." She took Lucio with her.

She did not know the city in which she had been living for twenty years. She never went out except to go to the Church of St. Antonio of the Poor, in Senado Street, at the bottom of the hill. She said to Lucio, "You must miss school to-day, my son," and told him where she wished to go. They took a tramcar at the bottom of the Senado hillside. It was a short ride. During the whole of the tram journey she never spoke. Lucio saw that his mother had her hands down in her old leather purse and that she was fingering the beads of a rosary that accompanied her everywhere. She was praying. What could she be asking of the saints, her friends? They alighted at the railway station at Republica Square.

Lucio guided her through the crowds that entered and left the immense station. She gave him the money to buy the tickets. "Buy return tickets, Lucio, and the cheapest."

They sat down on the hard seat of a second-class compartment. It was the first time that Lucio had travelled second class. Going out with father was different. Seu Chico liked the comfort of first-class carriages. The train went on, stopping here and there at frequent stations. Through the open windows the sunshine entered and the colourful world outside was visible. Dona Josefa didn't care for the world. She was only interested in her house, her children and her few friends. She had never been inside a theatre or a cinema, and in her girlhood, in far-away Italy, she had read few books. Seu Chico had taught her, little by little, how to enjoy books, so that in her twenty years of married life she had read and learned much.

"Mother," whispered Lucio, "Mother."

She was startled. "What is it?"

"We have arrived."

They alighted at a little station surrounded by tall green palm-trees.

Aunt Thereza was surprised to see Dona Josefa. It was the first time in twenty years that her sister had arrived like this, without her husband. What had happened? Dona Josefa unburdened herself with feigned calmness. She had come to ask for help. Her life, if it was not one of privations, was one of resigned poverty. Debts multiplied. The family was increasing. Her husband worked very hard, but he had a mania for realizing foolish plans. She recounted the disasters of the week, the back rent, Fioravanti's pawned records, the quarrel with Aunt Branca and the presentation of the promissory note. She cried: "If we do not redeem it they will seize from us the little that we have."

Aunt Thereza, who was seated at the other side of the table, stretched out her hands to her. "Don't cry, please, don't cry."

"I could not cry in Paula Mattos. I would not like the children and the apprentices to see me weeping. I would not like Chico to see me suffering. He would think that he has not made me happy."

There was a pause.

Aunt Thereza—how gentle and fine was Aunt Thereza!—left her chair, came round to the other side of the table and sat beside Josefa, fondling her. "Does Chico only need two contos of reis?"

Dona Josefa raised her eyes, "Yes."

"Look, Josefa, perhaps I can give a hand. I can lend you . . ." She changed that phrase to "give you that money." She got up, crossed the room, and stopped in front of an old piece of furniture full of drawers. She put her hand in the pocket of her voluminous skirts, extracted a bunch of keys, and opened one of the drawers. From it she drew a wooden box with iron bolts in the form of irises. She carried it with her to the table. "I think I have here more than two contos," she said, and explained: "Do you

remember the tombstone that I wished to have made for my Henrique? The sculptor asked eight contos for it—a high tower with a bell—eight contos.” Aunt Thereza sighed. “Henrique died sixteen years ago—sixteen years ago! It is sixteen years since I started adding note to note.” She lowered her hands and opened the box. “I think I have more than two contos.”

“But, Thereza . . .”

She smiled. That smile was a poem, thought Lucio, who was sitting in a corner.

“Look, Josefa, I think that I shall not live long. I shall never live to see the tombstone of my Henrique—a tower with a bell, so beautiful, don’t you think?” Then she handed the money to her sister: “Take it.”

Dona Josefa shrank away timidly, while her sister filled her trembling hands with bank-notes and silver coins. “I only ask you one thing, Josefa: if I die, will you erect Henrique’s tombstone? Don’t forget, a tower with a bell . . .”

Lucio watched the scene in silence. Aunt Thereza seemed to him like a saint who had stepped down from an altar to take human form. “Don’t cry, Josefa, you are happier than I,” she said. Then she turned to Lucio. “This boy here is almost a man. He already has his name in the papers.” Lucio blushed. “The other day someone asked me if he was not my nephew, this boy who published verses in the newspapers. They even showed me a magazine where he was called a ‘child prodigy.’ Your Henrique will soon be a doctor. Chico has worked miracles. Do not upset yourself, Josefa,” she went on. “I will die before you, long before.” She sighed: “But I would wish, before dying, to see my son returning from the war.” Turning again to Lucio, she said: “Will you promise me one thing?” She called him to her and took him in her arms. “Will you promise me that when you are grown up and rich and famous, you will erect a tombstone for Henrique with a tower and a bell?” Lucio did not know what to say.

“ Will you promise ? ”

“ I promise, Aunt.”

Aunt Thereza looked towards her sister. “ Please, Josefa, don’t worry, you don’t owe me anything. Lucio is the one who is indebted to me.”

They got up to go.

Again, at the street door, Aunt Thereza repeated in the child’s ear : “ Don’t forget, Lucio, a tower with a bell . . . ”

103

In the tramcar that took him home, Henrique was reading an evening paper. He had fulfilled his father’s orders. He had gone to his relative’s house and refused to enter, telling the servant that he wanted an interview with his master. When his cousin came to the door, he said he had a message from Chico.

His cousin invited him in.

“ No, I remain here, in the garden,” replied Henrique, controlling himself. “ Father received your letter . . . and . . . ”

His cousin interrupted him and said in a scornful tone, “ And wants you to tell me that, as usual, he cannot pay.”

Henrique swallowed the insolence and replied, “ You are mistaken. Here is the money.” He drew from his pocket a packet of green notes. “ Please count them and, when you have done so, give me the promissory note.”

Aunt Branca appeared at the door of the dining-room, which overlooked the verandah. Her lips were white with rage. She had not reckoned on such an outcome. She was counting on her brother and sister-in-law coming in tears to crave for postponement. Henrique saw her, but, in accordance with his father’s instructions, he ignored her. He did not even beg her blessing or say good evening to her. His cousin left him alone for several minutes, during which Aunt Branca glared at him angrily, and then returned with the promissory note. This he handed to Henrique,



who immediately hastened away, banging the heavy gate as he went out. On it, adorning the centre, he noticed for the first time a brand-new coat of arms.

On his way home Henrique noticed on the first page of the evening paper that the Pope had made his cousin a marquis. Thus, in less than twenty-four hours, his cousin had displayed on the gates of his house the arms which he had adopted on being raised to the nobility, proving in this manner that the papal favour was not a surprise.

This same journal contained another reference to the fact that the Bank of Brazil needed new blood and that the examinations for applicants to the vacant posts would take place in the first fortnight of January. The nominations would be effected immediately after the results were known. The regulations required a minimum age of eighteen. But, thought Henrique, if his father wished, a false certificate could be arranged.

The candidate was required to be proficient in the subjects which Henrique had learned in his secondary school course. There was only the work of revising them, to get a little more practice in accounts and typing. He read and re-read the notice of the examinations and the subjects required : Portuguese, French, English or Italian, arithmetic, geography, history and book-keeping. Of all these, the most difficult were the foreign languages. But, after all, didn't he speak French more or less fluently, and didn't he translate English without the aid of a dictionary? He felt certain he would pass the examination and already saw himself approved and nominated an official of the first bank in the country.

On the following night, Imaculata was reading in the workroom. It was Thursday, and Chico did not work on Thursdays, but usually went to the theatre with some of

his children. Imaculata heard steps on the terrace staircase and saw Miquelina standing in the doorway. She put down her book and ran to meet the greengrocer. "What is the matter, Miquelina? Are you feeling ill?"

The old woman flopped down in the chair that Imaculata put out for her.

"But what is it? What is it?"

She sighed, breathed again deeply, and with a face furrowed by tears murmured, "Juco."

"Yes, what has happened to Juco?"

Dona Josefa was coming in with a little cup of coffee, quite hot, for Imaculata. She witnessed the scene and left the little cup on the side-table. Miquelina could not control herself and began to cry loudly.

"What is it, Miquelina?"

She was not able to explain. She could only repeat, "Juco, Juco."

Miquelina still went on crying.

Sá-Virginia, Luiza and some of the apprentices approached. All looked at her, speechless. Certainly her son must have died. Finally, a little more pacified, and accepting a cup of water which Sá-Virginia brought in, she unburdened herself:

"Juco has just arrived."

It was a general surprise.

"He arrived without being expected. He wished to surprise me. He appeared less than an hour ago." She was gasping for breath. "He came foolishly to embrace me and his sister."

There was a great silence loaded with anguish.

"He heard the whole story of Marcolina without saying a word. Looking at me with those great eyes of his that no longer cry, the eyes of a man. After what I told him, he said to me: 'Why did you lie? Why?' I did not know what to say to him. He remained silent, more than half an hour. I asked him then if he was hungry after such a long journey. He refused to eat but went on

speaking about his sister. 'Mother, it is not necessary to tell anyone that I have come, for I am going to-morrow. I will not remain on the hill—I am ashamed, I am ashamed.'"

Miquelina wrung her calloused hands. "He is going away to-morrow early."

She cried aloud in her grief: "What evil have I done, what evil have I done?"

Dona Josefa embraced her.

105

It was after eleven when Seu Chico, just back from the theatre, knocked at the old greengrocer's door. Who could it be? Juco and Miquelina looked at each other in silence. The knocks followed more loudly.

"Are you sleeping, Miquelina?" cried Chico outside.

The door opened suddenly. Chico entered, but the greengrocer immediately shut the door behind him.

Juco fell into the arms of his godfather whom he loved and admired so much. Seu Chico noticed how greatly he had changed. He was now no longer a boy, but a tall, handsome, well-shaped young man.

He spoke Portuguese without mistakes and had learnt the job of a mechanic at school. After so many years of absence the meeting moved them both. Seu Chico had accustomed himself to regard Juco as part of his family. After half an hour of conversation, Seu Chico came to the point. "No, Juco, you can't leave your mother here alone."

"But you know quite well that I cannot remain on the hill—people do not begin life with a shame like this."

"But the blame is not yours."

"But I know myself. If I remain, one day someone on the hill will refer to it, in a discussion or in jest. I won't bear it. I know myself and I don't wish to end my life in prison. I already had a plan in my head when I came home to see Mother. . . ." He paused. The name of his

sister would burn his lips. He did not say it. Then he continued: "A colleague of mine is going to work in Manáos. I am going with him to start life as a rubber-planter.

"Alone?" asked the godfather.

Juco replied, embarrassed: "If Mother wishes, I will take her with me, but," he added with decision, "I won't stay on the hill or in Rio."

106

Lulu knew that Miquelina was selling her shop and arranging to accompany her son, who, since his arrival, had never left the house except to visit his godfather, and refused to see anybody. Lulu resolved to call on her.

"I heard you were leaving us . . ." he said, entering the greengrocer's shop.

Miquelina smiled. She looked happy.

Was she not going to the Amazonas with her son? He would get married and give her grandsons. She took the pianist to the room at the back, where the young man was reclining in the hammock, reading a newspaper. Lulu had known him as a boy. They shook hands.

"Well, how are you getting on, Juco?"

"All right."

"So you are going to be a rubber planter?"

"Next month we sail . . ."

"One month still to wait! Wouldn't you like to see the town which you haven't seen for six years?"

The boy blushed. His big green eyes filled with a strange light and then grew dull again. "You know the reason, don't you, Lulu?"

"I know."

Juco changed the subject. "How is your music getting on, Lulu? Lucio showed me his paper with a tribute to you." He grew animated. "My godfather is a great man. His children will go a long way."

Lulu began expressing his admiration for Juco, praising his perfect teeth, his broad chest, his well-shaped hands.

"But why are you going so far away?" he asked. "What an idea, to go to the rubber plantations! Why not go to São Paulo or Minas?"

Juco offered him cigarettes.

"I don't smoke," said the pianist.

"You have no little vices," said the youth, laughing. Lulu blushed.

Miquelina brought them cups of coffee. They drank it slowly.

"Surely, Juco, you are not going to remain shut up here for a whole month?"

"But I am not remaining shut up. Every night I go to my godfather's house. They are the only people I make a point of seeing. I am even helping them in the 'little theatre.'"

"You really don't wish to see Rio again?"

Juco did not say anything. The smoke from his cigarette made an arabesque design in the air of the room.

"Rio has changed since you left. Rio changes every day, it is a new city every week. Look, I understand that you do not wish to see the hill, but it is not right that you should spend your last days in Rio without visiting it, without knowing it."

Juco looked doubtful, and Lulu grew bolder. "To-day you move from the hill. You come to the room where I live in Lavrado Street. It is yours. I work at night in a bar at Lapa, but I have the day free. We can go out together."

Miquelina, who heard that part of the discussion, agreed, "It is a good idea, my son."

The boy was undecided. "But I cannot accept . . ."

Lulu smiled. "Why not? Miquelina and I are old friends. I have known you since you were a little boy."

The greengrocer insisted. It was too saddening to see her son shut up day after day between four walls, with

neighbours stopping before the shop to see if they could get a glimpse of him, as if he were a strange animal. The news of Juco's return had naturally spread over the whole hill. "Come, my son, between now and January the time will pass so quickly. Every morning when I come back from the market I'll see you."

Juco extended his hand to the pianist. "All right, then, that's settled."

That handshake made Lulu tremble. Juco's broad hand reminded him of another hand, one that had beaten him.

107

Before Easter Dona Josefa would have another child to look after, but that did not prevent her from taking care, as always, of her house, her children, her husband and the apprentices. She walked and slept at the usual hours, tiring herself with the same duties, indifferent to the measures she should take for the life she was carrying within her. It is true that sometimes she felt the weight in her womb as a pain. It made her dizzy, but she kept silent, knowing it would pass in a few months. Seu Chico treated her with greater kindness than usual. The increase in the family did not worry him at all. Brazil needed population. They were contributing patriotically to the increase of the population of their adopted country.

Aunt Thereza had given her all the money that she had kept in her wooden box with iron bolts in the form of irises, and the sum had more than covered the promissory note. Don Josefa wished to give back the surplus, six hundred milreis or more, but her sister refused to take them. Dona Josefa then remembered Fioravanti's pawned records. She went with Amparo to fetch them from an extraordinary house, painted green, with a Jewish name on the signboard, in Luis de Camões Street. After bringing back the records she still had a hundred milreis left over from Aunt Thereza's money. It was Imaculata who suggested :

“With that money we can buy the baby’s layette.”

Dona Josefa smiled at the idea. The hundred milreis were then spent on silks, net-lace, babies’ cups and little woollen slippers. It was the first time since the birth of Imaculata that one of her eight children was going to receive a brand-new baby’s trousseau. It was twenty years since Imaculata’s little jackets had begun to pass from one to another, mended, stitched, altered here and there with a knot of ribbon or with a piece of new lace.

One night when the two were on the verandah, Seu Chico said : “It would be fine if we had another boy.”

Dona Josefa smiled.

“Yes, a boy,” he continued, with delight shining in his blue eyes. “I have already chosen his name—Dante Gabriel.”

His wife did not reply. She was too tired to think of the name of the child she was carrying in her womb.

108

But Lucio knew of his father’s latest passion. They had discovered a book of pictures by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in a second-hand bookshop. The paintings were of a delicacy of detail, of a simplicity of style and colouring, that enraptured Seu Chico. They reminded him of the artists who had adorned the walls of the Convent of St. Mark in Florence. He wished to know everything about Rossetti, but the encyclopedia gave little information—only the dates of his birth and death and a list of his principal works. He questioned Zacarias. The painter knew even less, but Zacarias, like the tailor, was impressed by the book of reproductions of Rossetti’s paintings. One Sunday afternoon the two went to the National Library to search for further details. That evening, as soon as he had entered the house, Chico asked for Lucio. “He is not well, he’s in bed.”

He ran to see him and found him tucked up in bed, very pale, with a touch of fever. He sat down at the side of the bed. "Lucio, Dante Gabriel Rossetti was also a poet."

Seu Chico arranged the bolsters behind his son's thin back. "Zacarias and I went to the Library, we turned the pages of so many books on the lives of painters." Seu Chico took the boy's feverish hands between his own. One would have said that both were the same age. Lucio listened, fascinated. His father told him, in that manner which was all his own, about the life of the English poet; how he was the son of exiled Italians, and in love with a woman who had died young, and whose face was drawn from life in all his pictures. Then he told how, after his wife's death, the poet-painter had placed all his poems in her coffin and had buried them with her.

A ray of sunshine which came in through the open window brightened Seu Chico's head. "And after that, what do you think happened, Lucio?" Chico was exultant. He had so much to tell. "Seven years after the death of his wife, Dante Gabriel Rossetti begged permission to disinter her in order to collect the poems which he had placed in her grave."

There was a pause. It was Lucio who broke the silence. "And then, Father?"

"Then? Why, he published the poems."

Chico laughed. "Glory was fairer than love."

So it happened that because a book of reproductions had revealed to him the sensitiveness and beautiful art of a painter-poet, Chico resolved that "the child to be born, if it were a male, should receive the name of Dante Gabriel."

Juco went to stay with Lulu.

The pianist had arranged another bed in his small room. He tried to guess what was going on in the boy's head and gradually extorted from him his confidences and dreams.



Juco unburdened himself. He had left in Jaboticabal a sweetheart, a little servant girl whom he had seduced.

After that, whenever Lulu noticed that Juco was silent, he knew where his thoughts were.

The pianist took measures to see that Juco was short of nothing ; that he had his meals at fixed times, and that his bath water was fragrant with bath salts that he had bought specially. " I wish you to be happy in your last weeks in Rio," he used to say.

One morning Juco woke early and came upon Lulu blacking his shoes.

Juco protested : " No, that is too much, Lulu." He took the shoes from him.

## 110

Luiza had a lovely voice. Frequently during the rehearsals at Sá Carola's the other shepherdesses stopped singing to hear her.

But in the centre of Sá Carola's room, while she was whirling round on her heels, shaking her tambourine adorned with coloured ribbons, she thought nervously of Eurico, who would be waiting for her in the garden. The night before he had whispered in her ear, " Do you remember what you promised me ? Do you remember ? "

She had not answered him.

Eurico had gone on, " I have been to the doctor every day," and had whispered, urgently, in her ear, " I'll be all right in a few weeks. If you don't keep your promise, I'll be ready for another." Then he took her violently in his arms and clasped her against his chest, smelling of sweat and smoke. He squeezed her, and looking deep into her eyes, asked her in a voice that gave Luiza the shivers : " Will you keep your promise ? "

What could she say to him ?

" Will you ? "

He bruised her in this violent embrace.

She even felt his nails scratching her arms.

Luiza now made a pretence of forgetting him and her promise. She whirled more violently on her heels, swinging her skirts. She sang loudly as if to stifle the fear which filled her agitated heart.

### III

The newspapers were full of impressive cables describing the bravery of the Portuguese on the battlefields of France.

Gilberto read them aloud enthusiastically. Those Portuguese were admirable. They fought like the bravest, and they died in thousands.

One of the telegrams told of a Portuguese woman of the humblest origin who had lost three sons on the battlefield. Even that did not weaken her spirit, for she appeared at the Town Hall of Lisbon, with her fourth and last son, a stripling of seventeen, and gave him to the fatherland for the common cause.

"If I had had more sons," she said, "I would have given them all to the country."

Seu Chico, who was sewing in silence, listening attentively to the reading, interrupted Gilberto: "Read that telegram again," he said.

Amparo, who, seated on a bench beside Imaculata's machine, listened quietly to the newspaper's account of the heroism of her loved one's people, raised her eyes. What was happening to her father?

Gilberto repeated the telegram and then read out another which described how a handful of less than a hundred Portuguese heroically defended a strategic position against three times the number of Germans aided by aeroplanes.

During that time Professor Liro entered. He had come

to give his lesson to Gloria-Helena. "Good morning," murmured the professor, in a tired voice, his left hand on his breast. That incessant pain. . . . "Good morning, folks."

"Good day, Professor Liro."

The professor, fat as a balloon, had climbed the hill very slowly, but in spite of that he was sweating from every pore.

"Sit down."

They gave him a chair.

Seu Chico, who had now completely forgotten his hatred of the Portuguese and the fact that he had said many a time, "I prefer to see my daughter dead rather than married to a Portuguese," at once asked the professor if he had read the latest war despatches.

Seu Liro had not. Since early in the morning he had been in the streets going from house to house giving lessons.

"Here is the paper," said Seu Chico, taking it from Gilberto's hand. "See for yourself, the Portuguese are a people of tough fibre." He read out again the messages which Gilberto had already read for the little audience consisting of the apprentices and his two elder sisters.

While he listened, Professor Liro interrupted with frequent exclamations of "Bravo," and when the tailor, moved with enthusiasm, had finished the account of Portuguese heroism, the professor said, "I never denied that they were brave . . ."

There was a short silence. Amparo's heart beat quickly, while the thoughts of Imaculata, who sat with downcast eyes, were far away.

Seu Liro now embarked on his favourite theme. What people, he asked, were more noble than the Portuguese? A race of navigators, discoverers, tamers of the seas and wilds, first masters of the whole world. Portugal to-day was a mere nothing, compared with its glorious past. Her soldiers, brave though they were, were ants compared with their ancestors, who had filled the seas with bold sailing-

ships, carried to distant lands the music of their tongue, and planted in far continents the religion of Christ.

Gloria-Helena now appeared and said : " Good morning, Seu Liro," but the professor did not hear her. He was seated in the middle of the workroom, carried away with enthusiasm by the things he was relating. " Look, my dear Chico," he concluded, " in the dictionaries of the whole world, every time that the word Portuguese is mentioned, they ought also to put down as a synonym ' hero.' " He now noticed Gloria-Helena and wished her good morning.

" Good morning, Seu Liro. I have already said good morning," observed Gloria-Helena, smiling.

" Already ? "

The professor got up. He did not look so stout and so tired, after having entered for a few moments the world of his imagination, the world of heroes.

112

Lulu had been on holiday for several days. He had asked specially for a week's leave in order to be able to show Juco the city which he knew so imperfectly ; to take him to Muda da Tijuca, to Cascatinha, to the Sugar Loaf. He hoped that the boy might feel a yearning for Rio when he was amongst the rubber planters, if he had all those images of beauty stored in his memory.

One afternoon, when he returned to the house, Lulu found that Juco had gone out without him. The boy had left a note on the dining-table : " I am going to get a change. I realize that it is too much for me . . . a fortnight without a woman. I am going out to see if I can find one."

Lulu read and re-read the note. What a nuisance ! Why had Juco chosen that particular night ? He had brought especially from town a roast chicken, prawn cakes and some little tarts, still warm. To increase the brightness

of the meal he had even bought a bottle of Chianti. A very beastly mania, Lulu thought, this urge for a woman. Juco could catch a disease from a prostitute and end his days blind, crazy or crippled. Did he not know that Eurico had been thrice weekly to the clinic for that reason? In his inmost heart he was indignant. But though his friend was not present, he had no intention of failing to enjoy his meal of roast chicken and Chianti. He set the table. He put all his best things on it, crystal glasses, a crocheted cloth which Amparo had made for him, some plates of cheap earthenware with blue branches on a white background. He perceived that, instinctively, he had prepared two places at the little table. If Juco would not come, for whom was he waiting? Perhaps someone might appear.

Juco was right, he reflected. The boy had tired of having him as a companion. To most youngsters the company of a woman, even the ugliest, is always agreeable. Why had Juco not been frank with him? Lulu knew so many women. He could easily have procured for Juco a pretty, graceful one. There were still some attractive frequenters of the bar in Lapa Street where he played who were interested in Juco's green eyes.

He placed the chicken on a tray. It was enough to make one's mouth water. He arranged the tarts and the prawn cakes on a dish. He opened the bottle of Chianti and filled his glass. The wine had never appeared to him so red, so like blood. He heard steps on the stairs. Perhaps it was someone who wanted to share his dinner? It was quite usual for some comrade to appear without being expected. But to-night he was disappointed. The steps continued climbing the stairs, on the way to the floor above.

A very great sadness attacked him, the origin of which he could not explain. Perhaps it was due to his having failed as an artist, as a man. . . . He felt disinclined to eat or drink, and, for a long time, remained with eyes fixed on the glass full of Chianti, the colour of blood, thinking, thinking, thinking . . .

Henrique's name appeared squeezed in, almost invisible, among hundreds in a corner of the *Journal of Brazil*. He had passed his examinations. The delight of Chico and Imaculata had no limits. The dream of both, to see him in a university, could now be realized. It had been worth the pain of so much sacrifice, so much fatigue at the sewing-machines, in order that Henrique could pursue his studies. The joy of these two infected the whole family. Even Dona Josefa lost for a day her sad appearance and ceased to look like a tired sheep, ready for sacrifice. In the editor's room of *The Swallow* Lucio was giving orders. A special edition of the paper was being prepared to celebrate the great event. It had been suspended for almost five weeks owing to the lack of writers—all of them being preoccupied with books and examinations. One day Lucio and Gloria-Helena, rummaging in their father's bookroom, discovered in a corner, yellowed by time, dozens of copies of a poetry review with a sonorous and pretty name : *Rosa-Cruz*. They read them eagerly.

"Father, look what we have found," Gloria-Helena exclaimed.

Seu Chico, who was ironing a pair of pants, looked at her : "What have you got ?" Before either of them could say anything, he forsook his work, seated himself in a chair, called them to him and, opening a review at random, pointed out to them a poem signed by Cruz de Sousa : "Have you read that ?"

Lucio lowered his eyes to the paper : "We have."

"What do you think of it ?"

"Lovely."

"Only lovely, my son ?"

Lucio did not know how to explain. His father came to his rescue. "I understand. This sort of poetry does not explain itself. It is either understood or not. Those poets were classed as 'symbolists.' Do you know what a symbol is ?"

No reply was forthcoming.

"‘A symbol,’" continued Seu Chico, "is an idea or a collection of ideas, represented often by a single word. These poets," and the father pointed out the copies of *Rosa-Cruz*, "were the only poets capable of expressing themselves and of expressing all their sentiments in words which have a special music."

Lucio and Gloria-Helena did not understand the explanation. But it appeared very beautiful to them.

114

To celebrate Henrique's triumph, besides the special number of *The Swallow*, Seu Chico ordered a dozen bottles of green wine to be bought from Lucas' shop, and Dona Josefa prepared a special dinner with fowl, porridge and macaroni made at home. Zacarias, Lulu, Miquelina and Juco came to the dinner. Seu Chico did not invite anyone else from the hill for fear of offending Juco ; his godson arrived in a taxi in order to avoid being seen. Besides, Seu Chico had promised : "You are not going to meet anyone from the hill, only old friends, like Professor Liro and Zacarias." Lulu, in order to be able to be present, had arranged for a pianist to take his place for some hours that night in the orchestra of the bar in Lapa Street. Fioravanti, who had also been invited, wrote to say that he could not attend because he was busy. But he sent Henrique a souvenir, which he described as insignificant, in a package curiously wrapped up.

"What can it be?"

"Open it straight away."

Henrique opened the package, almost guessing what would be inside.

"A pair of shoes !" grunted Gilberto, surprised.

With the shoes was a scrawled note by Fioravanti. Henrique read it and, moved, passed it to his father, who was standing by his side. The note said : "Henrique, I

made these shoes myself for you to wear on your first day at the university. Your friend, Fioravanti."

115

The dozen bottles of green wine soon disappeared. It was a long time since a similar feast had been seen. There were bursts of laughter and gigglings. Imaculata, copying her mother, had lost her sad appearance.

Amparo could not contain herself for joy. Her father had at last modified his opinions about the Portuguese. Now he did not consider them a race of exploiters or useless people. Since they had fought the Germans on French soil, with a heroism which gave them a different air from the other soldiers, it was only natural that Seu Chico should no longer insult them. She was even aware that her father had enquired from Dona Josefa : " Mother, do you happen to know if Amparo still loves Joaquim ? "

Dona Josefa said that she did not know anything, fearful of yet another scene. But her husband indicated that his views had changed by adding : " Look, if Amparo still likes him, it is foolishness for me to oppose her."

Dona Josefa thought hard, and thanked the ' Drowned.' It was another of their miracles. Luiza was quite right about them. Seu Chico went on calmly, " You can say to Amparo that I don't mind if Joaquim comes to our Christmas dinner. I know he has no family."

Imaculata, who had heard the dialogue between her parents, did not interfere. It was useless to interfere. Henrique and her father had changed their ideas about the Portuguese. Why should she be the only one to disagree? Besides, there was something more beautiful than races and countries—it was love, whatever its form and manner. She and her sister had one quality in common—constancy. Amparo's love for Joaquim had lasted perhaps more than a year. As for Imaculata, it was more than three years since she had loved Zacarias without hope of any reward.



Amparo could not contain herself with pleasure. The feast was to celebrate her brother's triumph as a university student. But . . . the triumph was hers also.

When her mother informed her of her father's invitation, Amparo ran to him, kissed him and whispered : " Thank you, Father." Then she took courage and said : " Why shouldn't Joaquim, instead of coming here at Christmas, come to Henrique's dinner ? "

Seu Chico consented, and so it was that Amparo smiled more happily than anyone, with Joaquim at her side.

At dinner, for the first time in many, many years, Dona Josefa sat at the head of the table, at the side of her husband, and was served by Sá-Virginia and Luiza. Toasts followed each other.

" Long live Henrique ! "

" To Henrique's happiness."

The glasses filled and emptied in the twinkling of an eye. The apprentices were already talking too much, and Gloria-Helena so far forgot herself as to abuse Dona Chiquinha, calling her " An old beast ! One day I shall be rid of her."

Gilberto observed : " On the day when Lucio enters the university, I shall kill all my hens."

The announcement caused general hilarity.

Only the two youngest children, Helio and Margarida, who had gone to bed early, were missing.

After a silence Miquelina spoke : " It is a pity Panizoni is not present."

Dona Josefa agreed : " Yes, it is a pity ! "

Zacarias, looking at the wine which was left over, said, laughing : " To those who are absent . . . "

All raised their glasses.

The professor wished to know how the tailor had acquired the copies of *Rosa-Cruz*. It was a magazine which in its time few people bought. It was never popular and died quickly from lack of subscribers and readers.

Seu Chico said naturally : " By chance I read the first number. I liked it and bought the others. At that time

I did not understand that poetry well, but I went on buying all the numbers of *Rosa-Cruz*. I read them and kept them." And lower, so that only Professor Liro could hear him, "I was keeping them for my children." He laughed. "At that time I had none, not even Imaculata was on the way. But I kept them for my children, who, according to my dreams, would be better educated than I. I knew that a day would come when the Symbolists would be appreciated.

Professor Liro cut short his revelation. "Seu Chico, each time I am more convinced that you are an extraordinary person."

The tailor, with his mouth full of macaroni, looked at him, smiling.

Conversation flowed easily. More toasts were proposed.

"Long live Father!"

"Long live Imaculata!"

"Long live Mother!"

"Now, gentlemen," said Gloria-Helena, hardly able to keep erect on her legs and with everyone looking and laughing at her, "a special toast for my dear Professor Liro."

There was a clapping of hands.

"Another one also for Lulu," added Lucio.

And Amparo, who wanted to show publicly that she had forgotten the scene in his studio, said, "A toast also for Zacarias."

The painter, who had approved the friendly gesture permitting Joaquim to sit down at table with the rest of the family which in the remote future would also be his, looked at her thankfully and, taking his wine-glass between his long fingers, wished health to the couple. "To the happiness of Amparo and Joaquim." All the glasses were raised.

There was now no wine left, and the old white-headed negress, Sá-Virginia, who was serving the coffee, insisted that Gloria-Helena should take hers without sugar.

Henrique, who was between Juco and Lulu, said to them in a whisper : " I must speak now."

Lulu spurred him on. " Speak immediately."

" But do you think that I ought to tell ? "

Juco said to him in a lower voice : " Take the chance and reveal the secret."

Henrique said, " Father will be cross."

Lulu retorted, " Do not hesitate, speak up."

Juco also encouraged him. " Go on Henrique, let your tongue wag."

Henrique rose and begged to be allowed a word.

He spoke well. First, he expressed his thanks to his father, mother and also to Imaculata for all he owed them. " I would like to thank you all," he went on, " especially you, Amparo and Gloria-Helena, for your patience in copying out the text-books I borrowed, so that I could study them. I would like to thank Lucio and Gilberto for their company and stimulation through so many difficult years.

" I would also thank my friends, Zacarias, Lulu, Miquelina, and even the absent ones, Fioravanti and Panizoni, who never denied me encouraging words and invited me so many times to cinemas, theatres and concerts, thus helping me to develop my faculties. At this table many people are absent to whom I ought to say thank you, and amongst them the sweet face of Aunt Thereza, who was invited but could not come because it is Thursday. Usually, on Thursdays, she receives a letter from Italy, and she wanted to be there when it arrived."

They listened in silence. Dona Josefa with downcast eyes, Imaculata nervously fingering the bowl of her wine-glass.

At the end, after praising his father, whom he wished to copy, Henrique let loose the secret which was tormenting him : on that afternoon he had enrolled for the entrance examination for the Bank of Brazil. Imaculata stopped fingering her glass and rested her hand on the tablecloth

in her astonishment. Seu Chico looked completely taken by surprise.

Dona Josefa raised her eyes, sensing a storm-cloud gathering over the festive table.

Henrique now went on to beg his father's pardon for having taken this decision without consulting him first. They must not think that his desire to work in the Bank of Brazil meant that he had given up his dream of attending a university. He would be able to go to night classes and, at the same time, earn his living with the knowledge he possessed, thus helping the family and, he hoped, making it possible for Imaculata to study the piano without the necessity of being stuck to her sewing-machine. He continued his discourse as if he were in a confessional. It was incumbent on him, as the eldest son, to keep an eye on the younger ones. His chance had come; this entrance examination for the Bank of Brazil was a splendid opportunity. He was certain his father and Imaculata—he insisted on publicly stressing how much he owed his eldest sister—would understand his decision, and they would understand that while working he would not forget his books. Henrique's last words were badly heard, such was the burst of applause that drowned them.

Professor Liro shouted to him: "Very good, my boy."

Zacarias got up from his corner and came to embrace him. "I liked it—you come up to my expectations."

Only Seu Chico and Imaculata said nothing.

Henrique sat down again between the pianist and Juco. Now he heard Juco say in a whisper: "It seems that godfather did not like it."

Imaculata's hand was still resting on the tablecloth. She was biting her lips. What was she thinking?

Henrique's speech had damped the gaiety of the party. A silence followed the applause. Gloria-Helena touched Lucio's arm, pointing to their father. Why had Henrique insisted on helping the family?

Was it not everyone's dream that he should make his

way, become a doctor with a brass plate on the gate? Now he had gone and spoiled it all.

It was Seu Chico who broke the agonizing silence. "Henrique, you do well to thank all for the help that you have received—from our friends and from your brothers and especially from Imaculata." His voice changed its tone. "I've always dreamed you would have a university career."

What would he say?

Dona Josefa lowered her eyes.

Seu Chico went on: "For my part I planned for you six years of study, books, laboratories; you know your father lives in his dreams."

"Father," murmured Henrique.

"By entering yourself for the examination of the Bank of Brazil . . ." He stopped and took a breath. "You've shown that you are a man with a will." All now looked at Seu Chico in surprise. "And I, Henrique, don't oppose. One man hasn't the right to oppose another man's desires."

Professor Liro and Zacarias applauded: "Very good."

Seu Chico looked at Imaculata. "But women at times do not think the same way. . . ." He did not finish the phrase because Imaculata got up and ran from the table in the direction of her room. Henrique heard nothing more. He got up also and followed his sister, calling, "Ima, Ima."

And as there was still a little wine at the bottom of the glasses, Juco proposed drinking to Henrique's success in the examination. The toast was repeated by all those present.

Dona Josefa raised her eyes. The cloud had passed. It was another miracle of the 'Drowned.'

It was not possible to think of the "Harlequin's Theatre" with Henrique preparing for his Bank of Brazil examination and Gloria-Helena, Amparo and Luiza running every night

to Sá Carola's house, where the "Shepherdesses" were getting ready for Christmas, which was already in the air.

Henrique had quickly convinced Imaculata of the necessity of his having a job, and it was she who was the foremost in helping him prepare for the examination. If Henrique chose to plunge into this adventure, she felt it was up to him to come out of it successfully.

One night, Henrique, who was sitting up late at his books, heard a desperate shout from Luiza's room. "Help, help!" came the cries. It sounded as if someone were killing her. There followed other shouts of "Mother, Mother." What could it be? The girl slept in the back part of the house, in one of the rooms next to those in which the apprentices slept.

In a moment the whole house was awake. Dona Josefa and her husband appeared in their night attire, running in the direction of Luiza's room. The girl emerged from it, trembling and dishevelled, her face wet with tears. "Mother," she cried. "Oh, Mother."

Dona Josefa opened her arms to her. "What was it, what was it, my child?"

Luiza could not speak.

Sá-Virginia arrived on the scene, dragging her slippers, in a state of alarm. "As for me, I believe she saw a ghost," she muttered. "I always said this house is full of ghosts..."

The apprentices, dressed in their pyjamas, appeared outside their doors.

"What was it, my child?" Dona Josefa asked again.

Lucio, Gilberto, Gloria-Helena, Amparo and Imaculata stood around, stupid with sleep.

Henrique did not know how to explain what had happened. "As for me, I was studying when I heard a shout from her. . . ."

They had seated Luiza in a chair and Sá-Virginia had brought her a glass of water flavoured with orange flowers. The girl opened her large, limpid eyes.

Dona Josefa went on, affectionately, "What was it,

my child? What was it? Tell me. Your mother is here."

Luiza said only "Eurico."

She was going to say something more, but did not venture, as the children and the young girls were within earshot.

It was at about eight o'clock on the following morning when Eurico went to the kitchen to say good-bye to Dona Josefa. He kissed her hand humbly: "Good-bye, Mother."

Dona Josefa did not know what to say. She embraced him: "Go, my son, God help you."

She saw him cross the dining-room with his bag containing his few clothes. It was his fault he was going. Why had he gone to Luiza's room in the night, like some bandit, wishing to possess her without the consent of God or man? Why? Luiza, who had been sleeping, was awakened by someone touching her body. She opened her eyes with fear and saw Eurico before her, half undressed, with a strange expression on his face and his green eyes scintillating like the eyes of a cat. He started kissing her furiously, and she shouted for help. The rest was known to all except the children, who were frightened by this sudden departure.

Seu Chico was shocked and disgusted. What the shameless one merited was a whipping. To have the boldness to commit an act like this in his house! Dona Josefa intervened. It was not worth the trouble to act violently. The best thing was just to send him away. The world would soon teach him. Besides, it was not just to hate.

"Despicable man," murmured Seu Chico with fury. "It is thus that he pays me for my ten years of affection."

Eurico took leave of the family. He did not say good-bye to Luiza, because the girl did not wish to see anyone. She remained locked in her room, in a despair which was largely disillusionment.

Also, Seu Chico refused to see him: "If he comes to say good-bye to me," he raged, "I shall smack his face."

And thus, with head lowered, carrying his suitcase with

his few belongings, Eurico descended the steps of the small stairway which led from the dining-room to the terrace.

He heard someone calling after him : " Eurico ! " It was Dona Josefa. He stopped and, turning, saw the sad face which had become so dear to him during the ten years he had lived in her house. He remembered the tenderness with which she had nursed him when he nearly died from pneumonia, spending whole nights and days by his bed.

" Mother ! "

She came down the steps, embraced him once more and quickly slipped something into his hand. It was one of the notes she had saved so carefully for an emergency. She said in a whisper : " It is to help you settle things during the next few days."

117

Luiza went about for some days with her tear-stained eyes. She really liked Eurico. Why had she promised to give herself to him immediately he was cured ? Why had she accepted, for months, without a sign of revolt, all his protestations, all his loving words, all his endearments ? What difference was there in being cuddled and kissed on the grass in the starlight or in the house, in bed ?

These questions disturbed her. She wanted to run to Seu Chico and ask him to pardon Eurico.

But slowly, after much prayer before the little altar which Sá-Virginia had decorated with flowers, Luiza decided that she ought not to torture herself. It was evident that Eurico did not really love her. He liked her, he desired her, but nothing more. He had just wanted to add her to his list of adventures and conquests. So she wiped her eyes, red with secret weeping for four days after Eurico's departure, left off pretending sickness, and appeared again at the rehearsals of the " Shepherdesses."

Amparo and Gloria-Helena, who were singing their parts as " Angels," were surprised to see her coming in looking



so happy, her lips parted in a smile from ear to ear. She went round and embraced Sá Carola and the mothers of the "Virgins," of the "Stars" and of the "Angels," who were sitting in the corner of the confectioner's room.

"What!" exclaimed Sá Carola, as she kissed her. "Are you better? Amparo told me that you had still got a bit of a fever."

Luiza became embarrassed. She guessed at once that Dona Josefa had threatened to punish any of the children or the apprentices who were rash enough to tell the neighbours about the unexpected departure of Eurico. She did not want Luiza's name bandied about by such people as Lucas' daughters.

## SECOND BOOK

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1918

GLORIA-HELENA arrived home on the first afternoon of the year, her face flushed and wet with tears and her hair hanging down her back in disorder.

"What has happened?" cried Sá-Virginia anxiously.

She looked half crazy.

"What is it?"

She had flown up the stony drive to the house and was so breathless she could hardly speak. It was with difficulty that she told her story.

That afternoon she had arrived at Dona Chiquinha's house ten minutes late. The old lady had insulted her and hurt her. "She called me a hussy. . . . I couldn't stand it and told her some home truths. I called her an old hag . . . a cackling hen. She completely lost her head and hit me. . . . Look!"

She showed her bleeding arms, on which could be seen deep nail scratches and bruises.

"I then decided to run away."

Sobbing, she told of her flight through the immense corridors of the house, followed by the barking dogs. The old negress, Inacia, who watched the scene, laughed at her with wide-open toothless mouth. Gloria-Helena ran down the jacaranda staircase, opened the heavy door leading to the garden, still accompanied by the barking dogs, and, as she fled, heard Dona Chiquinha's strident voice, still shouting shrilly: "You shameless hussy . . . you dirty Italian slut." She crossed the garden and dragged open the iron gate with the aristocratic coat of arms adorning

the centre and found herself in the street. Now she stopped, holding on to the railings and gasping for breath. Vaguely she saw, coming slowly towards her, the small cart, drawn by two bedraggled donkeys, which went round searching for stray dogs. In a flash—God would forgive her!—she saw her chance of revenge. The dogs were still barking in the garden. Could she do it? The cart drew still nearer. She could see the men in shirt-sleeves and large straw hats deftly throwing their wire ropes in the air. . . . Gloria-Helena hesitated no longer. One by one she called the dogs, that she had learned to love, by their names: “Tupy!”—“Leão!”—“Duque!”—“Heoei . . .” Their names got jumbled in her mouth. They all rushed towards her, with only the iron railings separating them from the street. Gloria-Helena, with a quick movement, threw open the gate and closed her eyes. The dogs brushed past her and, free for the first time, rushed out into the street, joyfully barking. Agile hands threw their wire ropes forming wide circles in the air.

“I covered my face with my hands, I couldn’t bear to see the poor things thrown into that cart.”

But suddenly her voice changed. “I am avenged.”

Dona Josefa did not like what she heard.

“How could you be so cruel, my child? What had the poor dogs to do with Dona Chiquinha?”

“But, Mother . . .”

Dona Josefa would not listen to her.

“There is no excuse. Go up to your room . . . at once.”

“But, Mother, she hit me.”

“Up to your room.”

The tone of voice of the mother was so severe that not even Seu Chico dared intervene.

Gloria-Helena, with rumpled frock and tear-stained face, crossed the workroom, her head high and her eyes flashing with rage.

She noticed, however, that, as she passed Lucio and

Gilberto, the two were watching her with breathless admiration.

Seu Chico awaited Dona Chiquinha's call, feeling sure she would complain, but the old lady did not come.

She was wise, knowing full well that the pride of her titled family would suffer a humiliation if Seu Chico should show the authorities his daughter's arms and body, bruised by her cruelty.

When she knew the whole truth, Dona Josefa regretted her severity.

"Why did you not tell me a long time ago, Gloria, about the way you were being treated?"

"Why, Mother, I knew you needed my twenty milreis to help the family."

The mother kissed her tenderly.

Seu Chico decided not to complain to the police, as Gloria-Helena had spoiled everything by her crazy gesture in freeing the dogs in such a strange way.

Deep down he was pleased, knowing he would have done the same.

Paula Mattos enjoyed the episode. Sleep would be peaceful once more; no more barks and howls all night long. Now the only noises from Dona Chiquinha's house would be the strange wailings of Inacia.

2

On the eve of Twelfth Night Henrique was feeling happy on his way home. He had passed his last exams. Soon he would be appointed. Where would they send him, to the north or to the south? Anywhere would do, so long as he made money. This was more needed than ever after Gloria-Helena's revolt. What a brave girl! He fully approved of what she had done. His mind wandered back to his exams. How glad he was he had finished with them

all. He would never forget the help his sisters gave him. But most important of all had been his father's help.

Full of pride and satisfaction, Henrique repeated to himself his father's phrase: "There has never been a failure in my house and all my children are always on top."

Well, he had won, through his own efforts, an entrance to the largest banking house in Brazil. He could still see his name at the top of the list of those who had been chosen from amongst a thousand candidates. His eyes shone with triumph. Of all those names, perhaps his was the humblest.

Soon now he would earn enough to help his father. The day before he had heard Gloria-Helena say:

"I think I must give up my dream of entering the Escola Normal. . . ."

"Why?" he asked.

"I have lost my job at Dona Chiquinha's.

"You will find another."

"I have done," she said, and showed him her fingers full of needle-pricks.

"What?"

"Didn't you know?"

He had to confess his blindness. He had been so occupied with his studies, always surrounded by books, that he had not seen the changes in his little world. He was embarrassed by his sister's confession that, afraid of finding other Dona Chiquinhas, she preferred to work at home, near her father and sisters. At first they did not want her in the workroom, sitting on a stool with a needle and thread between her fingers, learning how to make button-holes. She had cried and pleaded so much that they at last gave in. She had to promise not to give up her studies. Why shouldn't she? After all, Imaculata went on with her piano lessons, and Amparo also went on learning how to embroider, make flowers, frocks and hats. Gloria-Helena would go on with her lessons. Seu Liro could trust her.

Listening to her, Henrique did not utter a word; he only

stroked very gently her hands already marked by the needle.

As he neared the house, he saw Lucio impatiently awaiting him. As soon as his younger brother saw him, he ran to meet him. There was no need to ask anything.

Henrique shouted from far off, "I have passed, Lucio." Lucio threw his arms round him.

"You are marvellous! How I envy you, Henrique."

Suddenly they heard a terrific noise of dogs rushing up the hillside. They let go of each other, looking to see from where the barking came.

There was Dona Chiquinha, all dressed up in her black silk frock and befeathered hat, walking with her head held high and a smile of triumph on her wrinkled face. Inacia limped along a few steps behind her.

She had taken her revenge on the people of Paula Mattos, who had been so joyful when she lost her pets.

The day after Gloria's sudden escape, she had gone to the Health Department and paid innumerable fines for having unlicensed dogs. She had spent days with lawyers, stamps, official papers. And now here she was, surrounded by more than twenty dogs. She had decided that on this great occasion she could dispense with her car.

In front of Seu Lucas' store Dona Chiquinha stopped. All her dogs were around her, jumping and barking, each one with his collar and licence number engraved on a little medal.

Seu Lucas appeared in the doorway.

Dona Chiquinha pointed to her dogs "I went to fetch them . . ." In a loud voice, so that everybody could hear, she added: "I bought five more . . ."

Dona Chiquinha had not seen Fioravanti, in his long dirty overall, on the other side of the street. He could never bear to see or hear a dog in the street without coming to his door, very often with his hands stained with grease and ink, holding the shoe he was mending . . .

Miquelina knocked at the door.

Sá Carola, wearing an overall, opened it, exclaiming, "What a surprise! Come in."

"I have come to say good-bye."

Sá Carola opened her arms wide.

"I know. I know."

Putting her arms round her, she led her to the kitchen. Miquelina told her about her son's wishes. Perhaps they would be rich one day . . . perhaps! Sá Carola made her a cup of coffee.

"Miquelina, I must tell you something," she said, as she handed it.

"I saw Marcolina on Sunday night. She came to see the Nativity Group."

Miquelina could not understand. Had her daughter been to the hill and not tried to see her?

"I know what you are thinking, Miquelina. She didn't go to see you from shame. She is so changed."

And glancing at Miquelina, who was sitting with downcast eyes: "She came up to see the 'Shepherdesses.' She looked so different that hardly a person recognized her. She stayed at the back of the room quietly, without saying a word—so different from the Marcolina who had been my standard-bearer."

Miquelina left her half-filled cup in the sink.

"She knows Juco and you are leaving," went on Sá Carola. When the singing stopped and the room emptied she came to speak to me. What a joy! It was such a long time since I had seen her—about four years, isn't it? She threw herself in my arms sobbing her eyes out. She came after dark, so that no one could see her. She was longing for us all—but she is so changed. Her hair, her clothes—she is another woman."

Miquelina asked just one question:

"Is she happy, Sá Carola?"

Her friend could not reply. There was a long silence. Miquelina got up.

"It is still early," protested Sá Carola, adding, "You don't know the whole story. Someone from the hill went to see Marcolina, to ask her to return home, for your and Juco's sake. Did you know?"

Miquelina could hardly believe what she heard.

"Who was it?"

"If I tell you, you will hardly believe me. A girl had the courage to go . . ."

She paused, afraid of hurting Miquelina.

All at once Sá Carola said, "It was Imaculata. Marcolina told me."

Miquelina sighed. "I have always said that girl is white on the outside and gold inside. . . ."

#### 4

At long last Henrique's appointment was published in all the papers.

He was to be sent to Recife. The whole family was filled with joy at the news.

Only Dona Josefa cried as if her heart would break. Recife seemed such a long way off. Five days by boat ! Five days by boat !

Seu Chico tried to cheer her up.

"It is a beautiful city, Mother, just like Venice. . . . The rivers run through it and the houses are built on their banks."

She was not interested in the description.

It hurt her to have brought up her son—God only knew with how much sacrifice !—only to see him go from her. Twenty years in the new land, for what a reward !

#### 5

Miquelina was giving up her shop on the hill.

She was leaving with Juco for the rubber plantations in



Amazonas. She was happy. From the time Juco had gone to live with Lulu, the hill never saw him again.

Whenever he went to his godfather's house, he came in a closed motor-car at night.

Miquelina had changed her life, in her usual quiet way. She sold her business without any fuss. For a whole week, up to the day when the boat was leaving, she called on all her friends to say good-bye, looking more shrivelled and faded than ever. But she seemed happy. Dona Josefa told her she could stay in her house till she left. She accepted. She was going to miss them all, especially Imaculata, after what Sá Carola had told her.

Seu Chico did all he could for her ; he even arranged with a friend of his in the office of the Lloyd Line for cheaper fares.

He helped her with her trunks, cases and parcels.

She did not want to leave anything behind. She even took all her old pots and pans.

## 6

It so happened that Henrique was to travel in the same ship as Miquelina and Juco.

"I shall look after him till we get to Recife," Miquelina said to Dona Josefa, whose nervous condition, in view of her pregnancy, was beginning to cause alarm.

Even Sá-Virginia advised caution.

"The way you are going on, Mother, you will have a miscarriage."

Dona Josefa did not take any notice.

The thought of having her son so far away from her hurt her much more than the idea of causing the death of the child not yet born.

Luiza was worried.

"Mother, you must think of the others, think of the little one who is coming."

Dona Josefa lost patience, and replied : "If this one,"

pointing to her round belly, "is to suffer as I have done, it were better for him to be born dead."

To make matters worse, Aunt Thereza arrived one morning looking very strange. As soon as the children saw her walking slowly up the garden, they all ran towards her.

"You are blessed, Aunt Thereza. You are blessed . . ."

She held out her hand for them to kiss, and very gently stroked their heads. She seemed almost as if she were sleep-walking, but her face wore a strange expression and a sad smile.

"Aunt Thereza !"

Amparo flung her arms around her and kissed her.

"It's such a long time since you've been . . ."

Everyone was overjoyed to see her.

But somehow Aunt Thereza seemed to be only half there. What could be the matter? Dona Josefa, feeling something was wrong with her sister, gently led her into the dining-room. She sent all the children away so that they could be alone.

"What is the matter, Thereza ?"

Her sister very slowly opened her black-beaded purse, brought out an envelope covered with Italian stamps and from it pulled out a letter. Dona Josefa, watching her, felt afraid. Thereza handed her the letter typewritten on Government paper.

"Read," she said, and before Dona Josefa could finish, Aunt Thereza murmured, without tears and with a vague look, as if she were far away, "He died."

Dona Josefa took hold of her hands. They were frozen.

Aunt Thereza repeated in a dull voice : "He died . . ."

"Thereza !"

Words seemed so futile. Once more, in a tone to break anyone's heart, Thereza murmured, "He died . . ."

Dona Josefa did not know what to do. She wanted to hug her, kiss her, take her in her arms, but she saw her so

calm, so cold, without a tremor in her voice or frozen hands, that she couldn't do it.

"My poor Thereza."

"He died," her sister repeated.

Suddenly, from the drawing-room, they could hear the sound of Imaculata at the piano.

Dona Josefa got up to tell her daughter to stop, but felt Aunt Thereza's hand holding her back.

"No, stay with me . . ."

"But Imaculata does not know . . ."

"Let her play—do you remember, Josefa? How fond he was of music."

After a time Aunt Thereza left her sister and went through the house muttering, "You know, don't you? You *do* know?" Josefa followed her, trying to explain the anguished look in her eyes.

"You know, don't you?"

Nobody knew what had happened. But soon they guessed what it was! Aunt Thereza kept showing them a typewritten letter on the official paper of the Italian War Office.

Suddenly she ran to the drawing-room, where Imaculata was playing near the small, unfinished stage.

"He—Ima . . . Ima . . . do you know?"

The girl stopped playing.

"Aunt Thereza! Have you been here long?"

She ran towards her and kissed her.

She felt something was wrong. "What is it, Auntie?"

She looked up and saw Dona Josefa, her father, brothers and all the apprentices following Aunt Thereza in silence.

Imaculata heard a whisper. "He died—he died."

And the letter was shown to her.

"Aunt Thereza." Gently she put her arms round her and led her to a chair.

"You must rest a little."

"He died—he died . . ."

"I know, Auntie, I know. I know how much you must be suffering. Come, sit here . . ."

"He died . . . he died," she repeated in her agony.

All the family crowded round her, trying to make her comfortable : helping her in all the ways they knew. She received their words, their kisses, their caresses, motionless, with the same vague far-away look.

Now and again she would repeat : "He died . . . he died."

They led her to the dining-room.

"Surely you must be hungry, Auntie . . ."

Gloria-Helena had arranged on a corner of the table a knife and fork, plate and glass of water, while Luiza ran to the kitchen to warm some food left over from the family's dinner.

Aunt Thereza ate unthinkingly, mechanically drank a glass of water and asked for another. Sá-Virginia murmured, "Poor thing. If she cried, she would feel better."

But her eyes remained dry.

The whole night long she remained awake. Her nieces watched beside her, trying to comfort her. All their efforts were useless.

Dona Josefa lit all the candles on the tiny altar and prayed for the help of the 'Drowned.' She prayed also to Our Lady of the Heads, who had once saved her Lucio.

7

The next morning Aunt Thereza was worse. They called in the local doctor. She kept moving her head from side to side, whispering disconnected sentences, singing children's songs and repeating bits of prayers. . . . She would eat, it is true, what they brought her, but never slept for more than a few minutes at a time.

As soon as she woke, once more she would begin to whisper to herself, continually moving her head like the pendulum of a clock.

The doctor gave her a tonic, saying, "She needs it for her nerves."

Even though the whole household was upside down with Henrique's and Miquelina's coming journey, they would not leave her alone for an instant.

Imaculata, Gloria and Amparo were always with her, caressing her and calling her loving pet names.

Lucio was also constantly by her side. Once when they were together alone, Aunt Thereza asked him in a slow voice, "Do you still remember what you promised me, Lucio?" Before Lucio could reply, she went on: "Now, you must put both in the same grave—don't forget—a tall tower with a bell. . . ."

Seu Chico, the apprentices and the girls seemed to multiply the number of their hands in those troubled days. They never stopped working, or helping Henrique with his trunks, packing his books. Once more the father did the impossible, buying for Henrique new suits, pyjamas, socks, shirts, ties, everything he could possibly need. "He will look like a prince in Recife, the city of slow-flowing rivers. . . ."

Seu Chico could not believe what the doctor had told him in secrecy about his poor sister-in-law.

It couldn't be true. How could he call a person who was suffering the pains of such a severe blow mad? She couldn't be. . . . Without saying a word to anyone, he put on his best clothes, and was leaving the house when Dona Josefa met him.

"Where are you going? You can't leave me at a time like this, with Henrique leaving in two days and Thereza in this terrible state. . . ."

Gently patting her cheek, he smiled.

"I won't be long."

He wouldn't believe she was mad. He went to see his

friend Giffoni, the chemist, asking him for an introduction to Professor Juliano Moreira, whom he had always admired, and who had a world-wide reputation as a specialist in mental disorders.

Giffoni tried to dissuade him. The Professor was a very busy man, and where was Chico going to get the money to pay for his visit to Paula Mattos?

"I will speak to him. . . . Who knows? . . . I am sure he will come."

He persisted until Giffoni gave in and handed him a letter addressed to the Professor.

Arriving at the lunatic asylum of which the Professor was the Director, Seu Chico gave the letter to the nurse and, as he expected, owing to Giffoni's prestige, he was immediately taken to the Professor's room.

Very simply he told him the reason for his visit.

"I will only believe," he said, "in my sister-in-law's madness, if you will confirm it, Professor. . . . I could bring her to you . . . at whatever time you say."

The Professor interrupted him, asking: "Where do you live?"

Seeing Seu Chico's amazement, he went on: "You need not bring her here. . . . I will go and see her to-morrow."

Seu Chico could hardly believe what he heard.

"But, Professor . . ."

"Your address?"

Seu Chico stammered the address, which the Professor scribbled in his little note-book.

"I shall be round to-morrow, before ten o'clock."

The tailor was embarrassed and kept timidly twisting his hat.

"I did not expect so much . . ."

Once more he tried to thank the doctor, as he was leaving.

"We shall see each other to-morrow," the Professor said, holding out his hand.

When Chico arrived home, no one could believe his story.

Zacarias, who was there for dinner, was amazed. "How is it possible that such a famous scientist is coming here, just out of generosity?" The next morning, however, a few minutes before ten, a plain car, looking almost like a taxi, stopped before the gate. The whole house was agog. Seu Chico had praised Professor Juliano Moreira's work so much, and had spoken of it so often, that the children and the apprentices were all excited by the visit.

Luiza all of a sudden felt proud of her colour.

"Doctor Moreira is a mulatto like me . . . when we are good, we are very good. . . ." It was the first time anyone had heard her mention the colour of her skin.

Lucio had hardly slept all night. The prospect of meeting such a famous man as the doctor was so thrilling that it kept him awake. Dr. Juliano was universally renowned. If anyone seemed silly, made senseless remarks or sang disconnected verses, it was always said, "My goodness, send for Doctor Juliano."

Here he was tall—as tall as a giant—plainly dressed, walking up towards the house.

As soon as Seu Chico saw him leave the car, he immediately ran to meet him.

"Please step this way, Professor . . ."

All of a sudden Dr. Moreira was surrounded by children. He was interested in everything; the children—how many are there?—what school do they go to?—what do they want to be when they grow up?

Seu Chico, walking by his side, answered all his questions, telling him about his sons' studies, the approaching departure of Henrique, and how fond Gilberto was of birds.

"Which is Gilberto?" asked the doctor.

Seu Chico pointed out the youngster, who was feeding his blind bird.

"Oh, I thought it was that one," pointing to Lucio.

"He is the poet . . ."

The Professor smiled.

At last, after various stops, during which he admired the old sapoti trees and the blue of the mountains closing in the horizon, they arrived at the house.

Dona Josefa was there, at the entrance of the workroom, with her older daughters.

"I don't know how to thank you, Professor," she said.

The giant was already friendly with all. He stroked Gloria-Helena's curly head, smiled at the other children and spoke gently to Dona Josefa. "You must be proud of your little army. They look healthy and intelligent."

He paused. "I am sure they are naughty too. . . ."

Aunt Thereza, dressed in her black silk frock, was in the sitting-room, waiting for his visit.

She looked sadder, paler, when they came in. She did not see them arrive, and her arms were crossed over her breast as if she were rocking a child.

"He is sleeping . . . He is sleeping."

The Professor made a signal to be left alone with her.

Their talk lasted over half an hour.

Through the half-opened door, Dona Josefa could see him sitting by her sister, holding her hands, looking in her eyes, and speaking to her in his deep, low voice.

When the interview was over, he walked back to the workroom. His eyes had not the same joyful expression, but his smile was the same.

He was brought an enamel basin filled with warm water, in which to wash his hands, and a white towel with crochet all round which spread a delicate perfume of lavender.

Afterwards, taking Seu Chico by the arm to the terrace, he said in a calm, low voice, "It is one more case. I am sorry."

The Professor suggested a nursing home. Aunt Thereza needed rest, tranquillity; then perhaps she would be cured.

"If you don't take her to the Praia Vermelha, I may manage to get her into the private nursing home of one of my friends . . . for . . . a fifth of the usual fees."



"I don't know how to thank you, Professor," said Chico.  
"You should not thank me."

And looking at him with a smile, as if he were an old friend, he went on: "You do not remember me. . . . But I have known you for a long time. . . ."

"How, Professor?"

"One day I was looking for some scientific books in a second-hand book-shop in General Camara Street, when I saw you come in with that boy. . . ." The Professor pointed to Lucio, who was with Gilberto in a corner of the terrace.

"I also heard your conversation. Do you remember that story of the two shirts which were not bought because of some books?"

Walking along the path, the Professor continued: "From that day I became your friend. When I saw you yesterday walking into my room, I said to myself, 'Here is my little man.'"

Seu Chico was deeply moved.

## 8

In twenty hours more Juco would be far away on his journey to Manáos. As he was packing his clothes he missed a flannel shirt. Lulu suggested that it might have been lost in the wash.

But Juco had a good memory. "No, I remember seeing it here yesterday. I did not send it to the wash."

Lulu listened. "But if that is so, how could it have disappeared? Shirts don't grow wings."

"Well, perhaps I made a mistake. You may be right."

"If I find it I will send it to you by post."

"Good idea. . . ."

The subject was dropped.

Juco was laden with presents. The pianist had given him shirts, paints, books. Amparo, Imaculata and Gloria had made him ties and a leather purse for his money.

"Lulu, I don't know how I shall ever repay you."

"Don't be silly. . . ." And Lulu added, "In this world only friendship matters. . . . Friendship between two men is worth more than any fortune. . . ."

The phrase pleased the young traveller, but he did not say any more. He looked at his watch, another of Lulu's gifts. "The taxi must be waiting for us."

They were going to dinner at Seu Chico's home.

The house was crowded. Seu Lucas, Abel, Sá Carola, Dona Sinhá, Herculano, even Fioravanti, had arrived before dinner; they all brought presents, leaving soon after. "We shall be on the quay. . . ."

Zacarias and Professor Liro were like members of the family; they remained.

Lulu arrived with Juco. He looked flushed as he handed over a small parcel containing a tie for Henrique.

"It is nothing," he said apologetically. "I am so short of money. . . just now." He said this in a low voice, afraid that Juco might hear him.

Of all those present Zacarias was the least excited. He seemed worried. Owing to the war and the approach of Carnival, he had no orders.

"I think a sculptor is luckier these days. . . ."

"Why?" asked Juco.

"A friend of mine is making a little money carving small angels for tombstones. What can a poor painter do in these times? After all, I cannot make my living from the dead, like a sculptor."

At ten o'clock the guests left. Aunt Thereza was calm and allowed her nieces to put her to bed.

Suddenly she asked her sister, "Where is my purse? Where is it?"

"What do you want it for?" Dona Josefa was afraid the letter would return to her memory.

Henrique came into the room. Thereza still went on asking, "Where is my bag? Where is it?"

They handed it to her. She opened her black-beaded

purse and there was a moment's silence. They saw her put her yellow hand inside and felt sure she was looking for her sad letter, but she only brought out a green note of a hundred milreis, and very calmly, with an astonishing tranquillity, handed it to Henrique.

"This is for you, my little boy . . . for you to spend on your journey."

From the neighbourhood could be heard a monotonous sound of voices, beating of drums, rolling of cuicas and restless movement of tambourines. The Carnival dances were being rehearsed. Unexpectedly, an isolated voice, clear and pure, rang out in the sultry January night.

"Listen! That is Luiza."

After Luiza's success as a "Shepherdess," she was going to be "Flag-bearer" in the "Rancho dos Patrioticos."

It was Miquelina who asked: "At what time does the rehearsal of the Rancho end?"

Nobody knew. Sometimes it went on through the whole night. The "Rancho" wanted to win the cup, presented by the *Jornal do Brazil*. Miquelina shut her eyes. Perhaps she was thinking of how Marcolina some years ago led the "Rancho" down the hill, as a "Flag-bearer," with her white gloves up to her elbows, her white satin frock sweeping the stony street, and a glittering tiara of false diamonds on her head.

The ship was sailing at ten. At eight in the morning an ambulance stopped in front of the gate. Four men appeared dressed in white overalls, accompanied by a man with a bag who wore black-rimmed glasses.

As soon as Dona Josefa saw the nurses from the asylum and realized that they were coming for her sister, she started to pray silently.

The men in white and the man with the bag talked for a few minutes to Seu Chico and then approached Aunt Thereza.

"Leave me . . . leave me alone . . . with my son."

Her plea was not heard.

Imaculata came towards her. "I shall go with you, Aunt Thereza . . ."

"Will you come? You won't let anyone touch my son, will you?"

"No, I promise."

She helped her up and Aunt Thereza followed her.

9

That day was one long agony for Dona Josefa. First, there was the parting from Henrique, who clung to her neck, kissing her good-bye.

"I will be back soon."

So that her son might not suffer, she was determined to be brave and not cry.

"Go . . . and God bless you."

Henrique crossed the terrace, followed by his brothers and the apprentices, who carried his trunks and cases.

He stopped at the end of the terrace to look back. The picture of his mother holding on to Sá-Virginia, waving him good-bye, with her eyes dry, would remain in his memory for ever.

"I will be back soon, Mummy."

A taxi was waiting for him in the street. They filled it with his and Miquelina's trunks. Another taxi was taking his father, Miquelina and his brothers to the quay. All the neighbours were there to see him off.

"Good luck, Henrique."

"We hope to see you again soon."

Sá Carola placed a tiny charm, a closed hand made of wood, in his pocket.

"This is to bring you luck. . . ."

Barefoot children shouted his name.

"Good luck, Henrique."

The car moved slowly away. Miquelina was sitting by

his father. She had a lump in her throat. . She had lived on the hill more than half of her life. How she hated to leave, but God would help her.

Henrique was dizzy. He looked out of the taxi at Paula Mattos Street, his street, where he knew every corner, every window, all the faces. . . . At the shoemaker's shop Fioravanti stood waving good-bye to him with his dirty, greasy hands.

"I'll see you soon. . . ."

As the car turned the last curve of the street, on the way to Frei Caneca, Henrique looked back once more, through the tiny window, at all that had been his little world: house, trees, people, urchins.

It was his childhood he was leaving behind.

At the quay a crowd was waiting for them. Miquelina was walking as slowly as she could; she hated to leave . . . her eyes kept searching for a face she knew, a face she loved.

Juco was there in a new suit—his godfather's present. Miquelina could not thank the pianist enough.

"Lulu, may God bless you, and 'Pai-Santo'<sup>1</sup> help you."

"Don't be silly," Lulu replied.

Juco missed Imaculata. "Is she ill? What has happened?"

Miquelina told him the truth. She has already said good-bye to Henrique. She left to take Aunt Thereza to the asylum."

"She must still be there."

And, sighing, Miquelina finished, "What a holy girl!"

The siren of the ship sounded.

Miquelina was about to go up the gangway. Suddenly she stopped, turned to Amparo, to whom she had already said good-bye, and taking her in her arms, kissed her, saying, "This kiss is for your mother, and this one for Imaculata. Tell her I heard of her visit to Marcolina. May God repay her."

<sup>1</sup> "Big spirit" of African voodoo worship.

Amparo looked at her in surprise. There was no time for any questions. Miquelina was going up, step by step, slowly, like someone climbing up to the scaffold.

Seu Chico said good-bye to Henrique, giving him good advice.

"You can't forget me . . . you needn't even write to me . . . that is no matter . . . but always write to your mother, who deserves more from you than I do."

Henrique was speechless.

He went on board and, from the deck, shouted the names of his brothers, making signs to tell them he would surely be seasick. They laughed at him from the quay. "Write . . . can you hear me?" It was all they asked him. "Write . . . write."

Among the crowd, dressed in a black frock which made her look thinner than she was, and wearing a large hat edged with lace, there was a woman who followed with sad eyes the whole scene.

Surely she had, among the travellers, someone dear to her.

The sirens sounded for the second time. Gongs were struck, making a terrible noise. "Good-bye, Henrique"—"Good-bye, Miquelina"—"Juco, God bless you."

Lulu shouted, "Juco . . . Juco."

As the ship was drawing away, the woman in black with the large hat edged with lace took it off and showed the paleness of her complexion.

From the deck Henrique saw her. It couldn't be. It was an illusion. No, it was really her. It was Maria do Céu.

He had sent her a letter the day before, saying good-bye and telling her she had taught him to be a man, and that he would always remember her, even when he had grown old, as his most beautiful love, because she had been his first love.

And now there she was, mingled with the crowd, that

Maria do Céu for whom he had suffered so much. He wanted to shout her name, to say good-bye, but what would his father think? And his sisters were also there.

Henrique waved his hand and looked down at the quay, at his father whom he loved so much, at his sisters, his friends, at the city which he was leaving behind, for how long? Perhaps for all his life.

10

Seu Chico decided to move the furniture from the house at Todos os Santos, where Aunt Thereza had lived for so many years, as it was impossible to find the money for its rent in addition to the expenses of the nursing home.

Amparo, Lucio, Gloria-Helena and Gilberto went with their mother to Todos os Santos, taking Sá-Virginia and Luiza with them to help pack Aunt Thereza's possessions. Lucio and Gilberto were excited at the idea of going into their dead cousin Henrique's bedroom, the room which was always kept locked up by their aunt.

They had heard wonderful tales about it. Aunt Thereza, after her elder son's death, made a point of keeping all the objects in the room exactly as they were when he last looked at them.

Every day she would go in to dust and to light the little lamp in front of the small wooden statue of the Virgin, which stood on a chest of drawers covered by a white cloth edged with crochet.

While Dona Josefa was busy superintending the work of rolling carpets, tying chairs together, taking tables and cupboards to pieces so that they could be packed more easily, and seeing to the hundreds of odd jobs that had to be done, Lucio and Gilberto opened the door of the room where their cousin had died twenty years previously.

Their hearts seemed to jump out of their mouths.

They felt as if they were going through the catacombs of Rome or visiting the cells, cut out of the rocks, of the

mountain of Santa Clara ; as if they were walking along the mysterious streets of Santa Rita de Cassia, with its houses inhabited by ghosts. So much mystery was centred in this one room !

A thin ray of light came almost timidly through the drawn curtains. Lucio and Gilberto gazed at the tall pieces of furniture made of old oak, and at the narrow bed, covered with sheets and bedspreads, on the pillows of which could still be seen the impression left by a head.

Then they opened one of the cupboards. It was filled with suits that, hanging up, seemed to take the shape of living scarecrows.

They both stood breathless and speechless, in a silence as profound as that in a church at the Consecration.

This was the room of the saintly cousin !

Suddenly they noticed a painting hanging on the wall near the window. It was of a man, about thirty years of age, with a large head, a military clipped moustache like the Kaiser, and black piercing eyes.

Gilberto pulled his brother's sleeve and asked in a whisper : " Who is it ? "

Lucio had never seen it before. To speak the truth, he did not approve of the unknown man whose moustache, with its ends waxed tightly upwards, reminded him of the German Emperor—that monster who sent his people to burn cities and kill little children.

Dona Josefa, who had come in unnoticed and was standing behind them, heard Gilberto's question and answered : " That is your cousin Henrique." She sighed deeply as she gazed at the picture. " He was a saint. He must surely be in Heaven . . . "

She crossed herself as if she were in front of a sacred image.

That night when they were going to bed Gilberto said to Lucio, " Did you have a good look at our cousin's picture ? "



"Why? Yes . . ."

"Did you notice that he had moustaches exactly like the Kaiser's?"

"I did."

Lucio whispered in his brother's ear, "That is funny . . . I thought about it all day . . ."

He added childishly, "I think all that story about his being a saint is bosh."

Gilberto was listening attentively.

"If he were really a saint, would he wear a moustache like that, the same as the Kaiser? I don't believe it."

And that night they slept with one more mystery cleared for ever from their minds.

## II

The ship which was taking Henrique to the north stopped at all the ports *en route*. From Victoria, Bahia, Aracaju, Maceio, he sent telegrams to his mother, telling her that he was well and having a pleasant journey.

One morning there was a telegram for Imaculata from Juco: "Mother told me everything. I was ashamed that it was not I."

Imaculata blushed. What she had done so secretly would end by being known and talked about by everybody.

"Who is it from?" one of the children asked.

She lied.

"Silly Henrique . . . saying he is missing me just because he could not say good-bye."

She quickly tore the little green telegram into small pieces, thinking how ashamed she would be if Zacarias should find out her other secret, that it was she who wrote to him every Thursday.

She went on with her work, thinking about the painter, whom she had not seen since her brother's departure. Less than a week but long enough to miss him. "Where was he? . . . What was he doing?" Seu Chico had told

her that the painter was very short of money. . . . The war, Carnival so near, nobody had money or time to buy his pictures. Zacarias was even thinking of giving up his studio, where he had worked for so many years.

12

Since Juco's departure, Lulu had become a different man. He grew thinner day by day and hardly spoke to anyone.

"Are you ill?" his friends asked.

He would invent different excuses. "My rotten liver . . ."

It seemed true, he looked so yellow. He still went frequently to Paula Mattos. With great care he would bring the conversation round to the subject nearest his heart. "Have you had news from our travellers?"

He would pretend to be gay.

"What! How many cables has Henrique sent?"

But in his heart he was sad. Nobody really loved him or cared for him. He did everything, sacrificed himself for others, and how little he got in exchange! He loved Juco as if he were his younger brother. Juco had promised him to send a telegram from each port. . . . "You *will* send me one, won't you?"

"Yes, I promise," the boy had answered.

He could not believe it, and, frightened lest Juco should not have the money to send them, at the last minute Lulu had slipped a note of 200 milreis inside an envelope and given it to him, whispering, "Look! This is for the telegrams."

He had left now six days ago, the boat had stopped in several ports, and not one telegram had arrived for him.

13

A week after Henrique's departure, during dinner a telegram was delivered.

“ Arrived safely. Love to Mother. Henrique.”

Lulu was having dinner at Seu Chico's. He was in a hurry, as he had to be at the little café in Lapa Street before half-past eight, but after reading the telegram he smiled happily for the first time in many days. “ I am glad . . . ” he said.

A few minutes later another telegram brought the news that Juco and Miquelina were also well and already on their way to Manáos.

Seu Chico jokingly remarked, “ I am sure at this hour Henrique is enchanted with the Capiberibe. . . . They tell me the girls there are really mermaids. It is not to be wondered at, born as they are by the riverside.”

Everybody but Dona Josefa laughed at the remark. She was crying. That was too much. She had not cried when her nephew died or when her sister was taken to the nursing home ; she had remained firm, tearless, when her friend and godchild had left for Manáos. She suffered so much when she was separated from her son that she kept telling herself that it was all an illusion and that he would return at any moment. But now the telegram had arrived destroying her last hopes. Perhaps she would never see her son again. . . . Brazil is so immense, bigger than the whole of Europe. . . . She had left Italy more than twenty years ago and had never returned. . . . The distance from Recife was nearly the same as from Rio to the little village in Italy where she had been born. Perhaps her son would never return. She had heard that the sun of the north dries the soil and kills the people. . . . How she cried, holding the telegram between her trembling fingers. Suddenly she felt a pain, the same pain she had felt the whole day. She could hardly breathe.

“ What is it, Mother ? ”

They took her to bed.

It was eight o'clock. They called the ambulance. The doctor and the nurse were already in her room. Sitting in

a corner of the workroom was Lulu, more silent and sad than ever.

From Dona Josefa's room could be heard a moaning and crying. Sá-Virginia said to the pianist, "Lulu, don't forget your work." As he didn't move, the old negress insisted, "Go and come back, my son. . . . God will help us."

Lulu got up and, putting on his hat, left the house.

An hour later, Seu Chico said sadly to the doctor : "It is the third child we have lost in this way."

The doctor looked at him with pity.

Seu Chico went on, "Do you know, Doctor, we don't mind having children and bringing them up. . . . God punishes us because we love them even before they are born."

He added thoughtfully : "There are so many rich people who need to have miscarriages, but not us. . . ."

Dona Josefa did not recognize her husband or anyone else. She kept calling in a strange voice, "Henrique, Henrique." Seu Chico would take her hands, saying, "He is coming soon . . . very soon."

He recognized in the voice of his wife the same tone as when her sister had said, "He died . . . he died."

It was Amparo who suggested the best way to deceive Dona Josefa. Lucio was there, and he was as tall as his brother. Why not make him put on one of Henrique's suits? Perhaps it would help her. They asked the doctor, who said it could do no harm.

So the young poet was dressed up as Henrique. It was the first time he had worn long trousers. Up to that moment he had only worn the school uniforms and, at home, short knickers. Lucio felt as if he were walking into a new world, the world of grown-up men.

They led him along, with his stiff collar and tie—how that collar was choking him !—to his mother's room, where she lay calling for her absent son. Lucio could smell the

chloroform and was trembling all over. He could not walk easily with the trousers getting in his way.

Seu Chico went towards his wife's bed and said to her : "Mother, do you know who is here ? "

She opened wide her calm eyes.

Lucio went a little nearer to the bed. "Is it Henrique ? " asked the patient.

"Yes, it is."

In a daze Lucio saw his mother's eyes looking straight into his with an expression of intense surprise. He also felt those of his father, Ima, Amparo, Luiza, Sá-Virginia, Gloria.

All around him were eyes, eyes, still more eyes . . .

The mother opened her arms to him smiling ; and holding him tightly against her breast, murmured, "My son."

She did not call him Henrique. Perhaps she realized that it was her Lucio trying to deceive her in order to console her.

She united the two images, the one who was far away and the one who was near to her heart, into one single person.

"My son . . ."

The next morning there was a feeling of gladness in the whole house. When Lulu came to ask how Dona Josefa was, he heard Sá-Virginia say, "The fever has nearly left her, she is much better."

She told him in her own way about the previous night's events, and how Lucio masqueraded as his elder brother.

"Seu Chico," she went on, "thinks that helped her. But I know better . . . If it were not for my 'Pai-Santo,' I could bet she would be stretched on the table with four lighted candles around her. . . ."

That same night, while her brothers were fast asleep and her mother resting, Imaculata was writing, in her beautiful flowing hand, her weekly letter to Zacarias. She had

decided that this would be the last one she would send him. It was going to be her good-bye letter. In these four pages she was going to lie for the last time. She told him that she was leaving, going away from Rio. In the large, brightly lit city his art had been her spirit's constant companion. Studying his pictures, observing with care his technical knowledge and his power of presenting life, she had learned many things. For example, she had learned to love old jacaranda furniture, with its carved lace designs. Now she was going. Going far away, to a land . . . Where should she go in such an immense world filled with beautiful images? She was going away, not to any corner of the Mediterranean, nor to the Orient . . . she was leaving very simply for the north, and she thanked him for the love he had for those tall palm-trees, whose green-feathered crowns gave the impression of Indians guarding the land that had been theirs.

Imaculata read and re-read her letter. She found her image ridiculous, reflected in that mirror of words. Deep down she felt a little jealous of Amparo, who fought and suffered punishment for her love and had ended by making the family consent to Joaquim coming three times weekly to see her. She was also a little jealous of Luiza, whose heart so easily changed masters.

With her it was different. Imaculata only understood a love that found relief in itself. She held on to her love without recompense, silently, like a prayer only known by her own lips. To-day she could admire Aunt Thereza, who, deserted by a husband whom she adored, was never heard to say one word against him. During twenty years of loneliness Aunt Thereza never confided her grief to anybody, not even to Dona Josefa. She kept her secret guarded, never complaining about the husband who was loose in the world. (He was the pilot of a cargo boat.) Imaculata and her brothers had never known their sailor uncle. They never heard Aunt Thereza speak about him, and thought of him as belonging to the number of the 'Drowned.'

Imaculata, reading her letter for the fourth time, remembered the afternoon, before Italy entered the war, when Aunt Thereza arrived in Paula Mattos. She came dressed in black, as if she were in mourning, her eyes swollen with crying, and asked to speak to her sister. Imaculata then heard Aunt Thereza speaking of her husband for the first time. She had received a letter from a little town in Central America, signed by the captain of the cargo boat in which her husband sailed, telling her of his death.

How she cried !

One would have thought she had lost the man who had made her entirely happy.

Imaculata put aside the letter she had written. The night was hot and it was nearly midnight. She was glad to remember that there was someone of her own blood who could endure like herself in silence and preserve in her heart the greatest love without a thought of a future reward. "To-morrow," she said to herself, "I will go and see her and take her some fruit."

•  
15

Zacarias came. He had not forgotten them. It was that terrible job he had taken on.

"What job?" asked Seu Chico, very surprised.

"Ah, didn't you know? Have you not read the papers? Well, I have accepted the work for the procession of the 'Democraticos.'"

"Not really?" interrupted the tailor, stopping his work and looking at him. Imaculata lifted her head. She could not believe what she heard. How could a painter, one of the greatest, waste his precious time colouring the hideous figures of a carnival procession.

"I didn't want to accept it," Zacarias went on, but I had to . . . either that or I would have had to give up my studio. . . . The rent was overdue."

He smiled as he added: "The politicians in our day

only want their portraits painted free . . . but they will pay me for this work. Do you remember the sculptor who started to make little angels for the tombstones? He is happier now, working with me on these allegorical images. For the first time one of my works, perhaps the worst and cheapest, will be applauded by the multitude on the Carnival Tuesday. . . .”

16

Luiza had a terrible problem to solve. Should she or should she not carry on as “Flag-bearer” of the “Rancho dos Patrioticos?”

She considered herself as belonging to Seu Chico’s family, and they were all in deep mourning for Aunt Thereza’s son.

She did not want the others to think her ungrateful when Dona Josefa was suffering.

But it was Dona Josefa herself who solved her problem.

“You must go on being the ‘Flag-bearer’ of the Rancho. I know you want to give it up because of my mourning, but that is not necessary . . . your thought is enough . . .”

Luiza was mad with joy, and every night, as soon as she finished her work, she would run out to the rehearsals.

She was saving as much as she could. Carnival ‘was nearly here. The whole hill seemed to take on a new spirit. All night long could be heard the noise of the drums, cuicas, tambourines.

The rehearsals were multiplied. The three days were anxiously awaited when all taking part in them would go out dressed up as kings, princes and noblemen, decked in flowers, their hair sprinkled with gold confetti, and all wearing masks.

The “Rancho dos Patrioticos” used to go down the hill on Carnival Monday, towards the building of the *Jornal do Brazil* in the Rio Branco Avenue, to parade its splendour



in front of the balcony where all the judges assembled for the final choice.

This year the "Rancho dos Patrióticos" was preparing a sumptuous procession reviving the glory of Antony and Cleopatra's love. Luiza had been chosen to take the part of the Egyptian queen, as well as being "Flag-bearer." This choice pleased her, but her club only gave her half the amount necessary for her royal robes, which had to be shiny and glittering, covered with false jewellery. She could hardly sleep at nights for thinking of the splendour of the procession she would lead. Over and over again she would see herself walking down the Ladeira do Senado, Senado Street, Rocio Square, Carioca Street, and arriving at the Avenida, like a queen out of the stories she had heard in her childhood in Santa Rita de Cassia.

17

Long before Carnival, Seu Chico was taken ill.

It was the old pain from which he had suffered at intervals ever since he was a young boy. The opinion of the doctors was divided; some said it was his stomach, others that it was his liver. But Seu Chico only remembered the doctors when the strong pains came back, and he had to go to bed, twisting in agony for days on end.

As soon as he was a little better, he would get up as if nothing had been the matter and go on with his work in his usual happy mood.

At first he would stay in and diet very strictly, but after a while he would get tired of both his diet and his medicines.

He would forget all about the different bottles in the kitchen cupboards and would refuse to have plain food without spices, and chickens boiled in salt and water.

This time it was more serious.

His skin was the colour of brown earth, and deep rings could be seen around his blue eyes. For more than forty-eight hours he was in severe pain, and nothing seemed to

help him. The doctor's injections, the medicines, nothing did any good. He lay in bed shaken by hiccups.

However, even in this state, Seu Chico never lost his buoyant spirit that helped in good times or bad. He always wanted his children near him, liked to see them round his bed and would tell them stories when the hiccups were over. One night he noticed that his wife's eyes were red. Surely she had been crying. Was she missing Henrique? Perhaps. He did not ask her anything, but for the first time he thought about death, a thought which as a rule never entered his head. If he died, he would leave his family in absolute poverty. It was not enough to have worked so much—days and nights and whole years. He was heavily in debt, not because he wasted the money he earned, but because he earned so little to keep such a large family. Even with the help of Imaculata, Amparo, and now of Gloria-Helena, and also the 200 milreis that would be regularly sent from Recife by Henrique, what he earned was hardly enough to pay for food, clothes, shoes, rent and doctors for eight children. He had never minded having as many children as God wished, but it was true that lately always round about Carnival the work seemed less. Why should people order suits of clothes when they were busy thinking of their fancy dresses?

He often thought of giving up some of the apprentices, but never did so. They were part of his sentimental life. He was sorry he had sent Eurico away and tried to forgive him. Perhaps it had not been wholly the boy's fault. What had happened that night? Luiza was always looking at him, they loved each other. Eurico had lost his head. . . . Hadn't Seu Lucas, always serious and respectable, once said to him, "Chico, Luiza is a mulatto who could make the happiness of any Portuguese. . . ."

Seu Chico regretted having sent Eurico away. After he had left the house, he had completely gone to the bad. He was usually such a quiet boy, but now he was always in trouble with the police.

Lulu came to call for Amparo and Imaculata. He was taking them to a concert. He did not know about Seu Chico's illness and wanted to postpone the invitation for another time, but Seu Chico, who was sitting on the verandah, would not hear of his daughters missing a concert just because he was ill.

"Of course the girls must go . . ." he said, and was so insistent that Imaculata and Amparo quickly got dressed.

Before going out Lulu said to Amparo: "I bought an extra ticket. Do you think that Joaquim would like to go as well?"

Amparo did not answer immediately. Her father was near, and she did not want him to hear her admit that Joaquim did not like music. It would injure her fiancé's reputation before Seu Chico, who thought badly of anyone who did not like either music or the theatre.

All the way down the hill to the *Jornal do Comercio* concert-room, Lulu seemed depressed. He said he was tired of life. How he envied Seu Chico. If only he had that joyful spirit, that certainty that the sun always shines after rain! His case was different; every day he felt more useless.

Imaculata looked at him in surprise. What could she say to him?

Taking hold of his arm in a friendly way, she said, "I know what is the matter . . . you are in love. . . ."

And turning to Amparo, who was walking on the other side.

"Don't you think so, Amparo?"

The pianist was irritated.

"What if I am? Is there anything wrong in that?"

The girls laughed.

The concert ended rather late.

Lulu took them to the bottom of the hill. He could not take them right up to the house, because he had to be at the little café in Lapa Street before midnight.

Imaculata thought him changed. His eyes were shining more than usual. When he said good-bye she noticed that his hands were trembling.

"Well, I'll see you to-morrow, maestro, and thank you very much for this evening."

Lulu did not answer.

"What you need is a good sleep," Amparo said with a friendly smile.

They heard Lulu's parting words, and soon he walked away. Amparo said to her sister, "Did you see, Ima?"

"See what?"

"Did you notice the look in his eyes? He was just like Aunt Thereza . . . when she went mad. . . ."

"Amparo!" Imaculata said with surprise. She did not like her sister calling Aunt Thereza mad. . . . They continued zig-zagging up the hill.

Suddenly they heard a shout coming from the bottom of the Ladeira do Senado. They stopped and looked down. A whole lot of people ran out of the cafés towards something that looked like a body in the middle of the street at the crossings of Senado and Riachuelo.

Imaculata said in a sad voice, looking at all the people, "One more motor-car accident . . ."

They continued slowly up the hill, but kept looking back.

"Don't you think the ambulance is taking a long time?" asked Amparo.

The night was sultry.

Many of the people were still sitting on their chairs on the pavements.

As they turned the corner and entered Paula Mattos they both saw in the darkness two figures going towards their garden gate.

"That is funny," said Amparo. "Isn't that Luiza?"

"Yes, it is," said Imaculata, surprised by what she saw.

"What an idea . . ." Amparo stopped.

Imaculata was thinking the same thing. "Fancy Luiza walking with that fat man, who looks a little like Seu Lucas."

They slowed their pace, with their eyes fixed on the garden gates, where under the light of the gas-lamp Luiza was saying good-bye to her friend.

The two continued their walk and approached the fat man, who greeted them, saying, "How are you, girls?"

And the two, surprised, answered "Good evening, Seu Lucas."

19

For a long time Luiza could think of nothing else but the fancy dress she would need for her rôle as Cleopatra.

"Where shall I find the money?"

The amount the Club had given her was enough for a good tunic, but Luiza wanted something dazzling, something capable of drawing everyone's eyes, something that showed off her perfect figure. She wanted to be a real queen. It was not her fault; it was the fault of the fairy-tales she had been told in childhood. One afternoon, walking up the Ladeira do Senado, she had encountered Seu Lucas.

The Portuguese, who had a thick gold chain across his fat stomach, started a conversation. After that, he spoke in a strange way every time he met her alone. There was a funny gleam in his little eyes, the same sparkle as Luiza had seen in Eurico's eyes when he tried to make love to her. Once, as they were going up the hill, side by side, Seu Lucas asked her about the Rancho, of which he was a benefactor.

"Is it true that you are going to be the 'Flag-bearer' ? I think it is a very good choice. . . ."

Seu Lucas praised her in a low voice, without losing his

respectable air of a fat man wearing a gold chain across his belly.

In the same tones as he would use if he were asking about Seu Chico's family, he said, "I hope I shall see you as Cleopatra . . . so I can admire you more . . . because you know I am one of your admirers . . . I don't know how the boys up here can be so blind as to leave a girl like you unmarried." She blushed.

"You know very well that no one admires you more than I . . . if it were not for this stupid convention." He sighed.

Before saying good-bye, when they were at the top of the hill, not far away from his grocer's shop, he took hold of her hand and, squeezing it, said: "If at any time you need me, just let me know."

Luiza was embarrassed, but Seu Lucas did not lose one atom of his air of respectability.

He was so natural that, even with his wife at the window waiting for him, his manner was unchanged. Luiza saw her and said, "Good evening, Dona Sinhá."

"Good evening, Luiza. Is Seu Chico better?"

"Yes, a little."

"To-night I shall come round," Lucas' wife informed her.

On the night when Imaculata and Amparo were returning from the concert, it was after eleven when Luiza left the house in Travessa das Neves, where the Rancho had its headquarters.

She met Seu Lucas at the corner, standing against a lamp-post.

"Are you awake at this time?" she asked.

"I have been to visit some friends. But you should not walk all alone at this late hour."

He looked at her with his small malicious eyes.

"Are you not frightened of . . ."

She cut in:

"Oh, Seu Lucas, what a silly idea. Frightened of what?"

"Silly? . . . Not even frightened of me?"

The mulatto paused. They were at the bottom of the stony steps of Travessa das Neves. Laughing heartily, she said, "Of you?" showing her white teeth.

"You are a real gentleman."

They continued along Paula Mattos street, talking about indifferent things.

20

The following morning the newspapers contained a short news item, only three or four lines long, mentioning an accident which had taken place in Riachuelo Street. The notice was so insignificant that Lucio, who was reading the paper out loud to his father, did not see it. A pianist, who played in one of the little bars in Lapa Street, had died with his head crushed by the wheels of a motor-car. As soon as Seu Chico heard of Lulu's tragic death, he forgot about his illness that had kept him in bed for a fortnight. He got dressed with Dona Josefa's help. The whole house had an air of sadness and misery. "Poor Lulu."

"He was such a good friend . . ."

"To end in this way, stupidly run over by a motor-car."

Seu Chico wanted to go to the funeral with Imaculata and Amparo. Dona Josefa, worried at the expense, made a bouquet out of flowers she cut from the garden.

"Listen, Chico," she said, "on the way back from the funeral, just go in to Saint Antonio's church and order a mass for the repose of his soul . . ."

Her voice trembled with emotion.

It was just like losing one of the family.

Lulu had no family except hers. He was not allowed in his own house. He could not get on with his mother and brothers, who hardly ever saw him.

Lucio wanted to bid farewell to the friend who had helped him so much with *The Swallow*, but his father explained that children were not allowed in the morgue.

Lucio insisted. "I'll stay outside . . . at least I can see his coffin."

He looked so upset that his father finally consented.

"Very well, you may come . . ."

At that moment the postman came with a letter.

As soon as Seu Chico saw the envelope, he exclaimed, "But it is impossible."

He opened the envelope quickly.

"What is it, Father?"

He did not reply.

As he read the letter, he became gradually paler and paler.

He folded it again, hiding his emotion, and put it in his coat-pocket.

Nobody, not even his wife, had the courage to ask what it was.

Seu Chico grew stronger. He ran up and down Paula Mattos Street with a paper in his hand, collecting subscriptions for Lulu's funeral. Seu Lucas, Fioravanti, Abel, the baker, the butcher and others contributed. This money and what he got from the owner of the café in Lapa Street, plus that which he gave out of his own meagre pocket, was enough to cover the cost of the coffin, hearse and grave. (Seu Chico had pawned a big watch he had had since boyhood.)

The funeral procession left the morgue.

Lucio had spent more than an hour outside watching the people going in and out.

Coffin after coffin was laid out there, waiting to be carried away by the relatives of the dead.

They nearly all belonged to poor people, hatless, badly dressed men and women, ashamed of showing their sorrow in public. One after another the mourners got into their taxis and started their journey to the cemeteries, following the slow monotonous rumble of the donkey-drawn hearses.

At last, Lucio saw his father, Zacarias, Seu Lucas,



Fioravanti and the owner of the bar in Lapa Street, carrying out a coffin.

Imaculata and Amparo were walking behind sobbing softly with their handkerchiefs held to their eyes.

With them walked a few women with painted faces and dressed in a showy fashion. "They must be friends of Lulu," the boy thought.

Lucio joined the sad group.

There went his friend, Beethoven's brother, killed in such a stupid way ! There were so many people who could have died in his place—Aunt Branca, Jack's mother, Dona Chiquinha. Why must God take poor Lulu, who never harmed a soul ? He saw his father leading to a closed motor-car a small fat lady with a very red face, who was mumbling words Lucio could not catch.

The procession was ready to start. In front was the third-class hearse, one of the poorest, but still gilded at the sides and drawn by four sad-looking donkeys, covered with black lace and with black feathers tied to their heads.

Lucio went in a taxi with his father and sisters. No one spoke. They were all praying. It was a sad journey. The lips of his two sisters were moving in prayer, and now and again they would murmur : " Poor dear Lulu . . . he was so good. . . ."

" What an artist "

Seu Chico never spoke.

But on the way to the cemetery the boy noticed his father taking out the letter he had received in the morning and reading it over again, slowly shaking his head from side to side.

The procession went slowly through street after street.

Everywhere the trams and motor-cars stopped to let it pass and men lifted their hats as the coffin went by.

Outside a school in Cattete Street, a crowd of children, who had just come out of their classrooms, stopped to watch the funeral pass.

The boys respectfully took off their caps. Lucio thought

of his dead friend, who had said to him one day, when he saw the famous Ruy Barbosa walking in the street : " I would like to be as well known as he. Everywhere he goes, people take off their hats . . . "

Now his wish had been realized. What a pity Lulu was dead and could not see the multitude of people uncovering themselves before his coffin.

How he would love to see the children saying good-bye, with their school-caps held in their hands.

At the cemetery Lucio noticed, without understanding it, how all those present—the bar owner, the artists, Zacarias, Seu Lucas, Fioravanti, the strangely dressed women with their painted faces and bobbed hair (they must be bad women, thought Lucio ; only a bad woman would " bob " her hair)—were trying to see the number of the grave, repeating it one to the other and noting it down on any little piece of paper they could find.

" They must be going to bring him some flowers later," Lucio thought.

The small fat lady, with the red face, was Lulu's mother. In the morgue she had done nothing but complain and speak badly of her dead son.

" God will punish him. He left his family . . . He mixed in bad company . . . His soul was lost . . . He was degenerate, and God killed him as he would any dog in the streets. . . . "

Seu Chico nearly lost his temper at the morgue and told her she should not speak like that. If the poor boy had faults, she should now forget them, because he was dead. The small fat lady was persevering.

" For years I have waited for this hour of my vengeance, and now it has arrived."

Sighing, she went on, " Why did you choose bad companions ? Why did you leave your family ? Why ? Why ? "

She looked half crazy, as she kept asking herself questions,

while she looked on the face of the dead pianist whose hands, crossed over his breast, seemed to express how tired they were.

By the grave, throughout the ceremony, the small fat lady kept shaking her head backwards and forwards and muttering, "You were a bad son . . . a very bad son . . . now you see how God has punished you."

Two tall strong men stood one on each side of her. Their resemblance to the dead suggested they were his brothers. They never said a word.

Finally, when the coffin was lowered and the soil was thrown into the grave, the small fat lady bent over and said aloud: "He only brought me sorrow. . . ."

She looked around and noticed that everybody had taken down the number of the grave. Then she burst out: "Who knows? He who never helped me when he was alive may help me when he is dead. . . ."

She pointed to the number of the grave and repeated it aloud.

"Eight-six-seven-six-five . . . eight-six-seven-six-five . . . To-morrow I will gamble on this number."

Seu Chico walked away with his daughters and Lucio.

The letter which Seu Chico had received that morning was from Lulu. It was a farewell note which he had posted half an hour before coming up the hill to take Seu Chico's daughters to the concert.

He said he was tired, disillusioned with life and mankind. He had failed miserably and had no will to go on. He preferred to die. He had planned his farewell so that he might take with him the memory of Seu Chico's family and have the sound of their voices ringing in his ears. That was why he had wanted to take the girls to the Bach concert. On leaving the concert he would say good-bye to them and would wait for the first car and throw himself under it. Perhaps it would look like an accident, but this letter would reveal the truth to his friend. The tears came to Seu

Chico's eyes as he read the last words. He would keep the secret. If he were to tell his wife she might forbid the Mass for Lulu's soul, though, in truth, Seu Chico wondered whether it was really necessary, as he felt sure he must already be in Heaven.

21

The emotions of the night before had so upset Seu Chico that he had to go back to bed. He was haunted by his debts, which would increase with Lulu's funeral. Was there ever a creature so soft-hearted as he !

He had spent large sums on the little theatre, which was not yet finished, and he saw debts all around him, which he tried to hide from the anxious eyes of his wife, whose heart was not strong. He had sold what little gold he had possessed : his studs and cuff links, a watch and a diamond ring. The only thing he had left was his wedding-ring.

But he refused to sell Zacarias' pictures and a bronze bust of Dante, given him by Dr. Viana, which he had promised to leave to Lucio in his will. He also refused to sell any of the books he had accumulated in the little room that looked on to the garden. And here he was ill, unable to work, the noise in the workroom diminishing day by day. If he were to die, what would happen to his younger children ?

The neighbours came in to lend whatever help they could. Zacarias, Panizoni, Fioravanti—hardly a day went by without one or other of them calling. Zacarias would appear, his clothes smelling of lime, grumbling and talking to himself. He would come just as he was from his shed and talk about the procession of the Democraticos which would brighten up the city.

Seu Chico would cheer up after these visits.

Fioravanti, still in mourning, spoke very little, but smoked his pipe.

One night, before leaving, Zacarias put a note of 500 milreis in Dona Josefa's hand : " Chico will pay me when he is better."

The clock struck six. Sá Carola, who was putting the last finishing touches to the pierrot costume she was making for her son, stopped working for a minute. She raised her eyes to the clock : it was six. She had forgotten time while she patiently worked on the fancy dress Herculano would wear for the Carnival. How tall and handsome he would look in this suit with its long tight trousers and wide sleeves and the huge white ruff which would hide his throat. Six o'clock . . . he should be returning from the factory ! She began to get anxious. Perhaps something had happened. Then she remembered it was Carnival Saturday. The whole city would be full of people making merry, singing, playing tambourines and rattles. Herculano, she could almost bet, would be among them. She smiled as she pushed her spectacles down from her forehead to her nose and went on with her work. Suddenly she heard someone knocking. Who could it be ? She got up. The knocking was insistent.

" I'm coming . . . I'm coming . . ."

Perhaps it was a customer coming for fresh cocoanut sweets. She opened the door.

" Oh, it's you ! Please come in. . . ."

It was the foreman of the factory where her son worked. He seemed different ; he looked worried.

" Please sit down," she said, handing him a wooden chair.

" Herculano won't be long . . . but if you'd rather not wait, you can leave a message."

The little man mumbled a few trivial words. Something seemed to be holding his tongue. Then he said why he had come. . . . He told Sá Carola to brace herself. . . . He came because . . . Then he blurted it all out. . . . He came because Herculano had had an accident in the

factory. He stopped. He hoped the poor woman would ask him some questions, but all he saw was a woman's face, still young, very ugly, undoubtedly paler since she had received the news, and her lips moving as if in prayer. Then the little man took courage : " A fatal accident."

Sá Carola got up and, still leaning on the chair, making a great effort not to fall, asked in a breathless voice, " Is he dead ? " but all she could see was a head nodding.

They brought her son on a stretcher. The factory had done all they could. An autopsy had already been made. They had made arrangements for the funeral, which would be first class and would be attended by a group of workmen.

" He died at his work," a well-dressed man, who had come with the stretcher, kept repeating. They told her the Director of the factory would attend the funeral personally. The dead man deserved every homage. " A brave lad." — " An example to all."

Sá Carola saw and heard these men moving about the house. They laid her son on the dining-table after covering him with a black silk cloth with a gold cross in the centre. They had brought her candlesticks, candles and a crucifix. They hadn't forgotten anything . . . " A brave lad."

Sá Carola heard their words of consolation, she shook hands with many people who said kind things to her. Somebody whispered almost in her ear : " You have the right to claim compensation, you know. Don't let them rob you. . . ."

" Compensation for what ? I can't be robbed more than I have been."

23

At midnight Luiza appeared. She was dressed as Cleopatra. She threw her arms around Sá Carola, who didn't even look at her. She only stayed a minute and as she left, she pretended she had not noticed the look of censure in Dona Josefa's eyes. The look of reproof had not

been because she had come in fancy dress. Dona Josefa had noticed the gold bracelets and necklaces the girl wore—which didn't look like imitations—and the showy dress hurt her eyes. For a moment Dona Josefa wondered where Luiza had found so much money. She did not know that Luiza, in her anxiety to realize one of her dreams, had believed in the generosity of Seu Lucas. She had asked him for a loan. The whole city got into debt in an effort to forget, during those three days of uncontrollable frivolity, the bitterness of the remaining year. Seu Lucas had not lent her the money; he had given it to her.

"The girl means much to me. . . ."

The night he gave her the fabulous amount, more than two contos, he went to meet her outside the São Pedro Theatre, where the Rancho dos Patrioticos were holding the final rehearsals. It was raining. Seu Lucas was waiting in a closed car.

"You shouldn't have bothered," said the mulatto, accepting his invitation to get in. The Portuguese turned rapidly as he closed the door: "Bother? It's a pleasure, I assure you. . . . But don't call me Seu Lucas. . . . I'm your friend . . . call me Lucas."

Luiza laughed as she wondered how far this nonsense would go.

The car passed over the wet streets. The Portuguese took her trembling hands in his: "How cold you are! I'm glad I thought of a closed car. . . ." And he put his arm around her shoulders. She shrank back in fear. Why had she accepted the two contos? Should she return them? If he had given them to her it was because he intended. . . . Suddenly she remembered Marcolina. . . . No, no, she wouldn't end like that. . . .

But the Portuguese was talking to her. She felt his hands passing over her blouse, and she tried to draw back. He was leaning over her, his face close to hers.

"What is it, Seu Lucas?"

"You're a maddening girl. . . ."

He kissed her violently on the mouth. Then he saw her bite her lips as if she were about to cry, and he tried to comfort her, saying he was sorry, but she was driving him crazy. This was no passion of the moment ; he had loved her for years in silence. He could think of nothing worse than loving someone in silence. He felt like a fool. He was so fond of her and wanted her to be happy. A girl like her with her head screwed on was mistress of her own destiny. She knew how to choose : she had before her a man who loved her and wanted her, a man who would make all manner of sacrifices, and who would do all kinds of foolish things for her. Why not give him what he wanted : the fulfilment of his love for her ?

The Portuguese clasped her to him as he poured out his story, and his breath was hot on her face. Luiza closed her eyes. There had been others who had wanted her, they had all made proposals, but none like those of this fat man with his thick voice, whose first thought had been to make her happy. The others had only thought of themselves, but Seu Lucas wanted first to make her happy. With these thoughts she surrendered to his kisses. His lips travelled over her eyes, her mouth and her ears.

The car continued on its way through the wet streets. It went quite a distance, then stopped at the bottom of the hill. Luiza jumped out, followed by the shopkeeper. They said good-bye to each other there. It was wiser. As she climbed the hill Luiza could hear nothing but an address the Portuguese had given her where he would meet her the following day after the rehearsal : " Come," he had said. " It will be quite discreet ; we will be able to talk there alone."

Luiza didn't sleep at all the whole night. She could not get rid of the vision of Seu Lucas' face, or the thought of his kisses. She thought of running to Dona Josefa and telling her everything, but she was afraid. Then she



thought of how she would go down to the city, surrounded by lights, like a real queen. Her thoughts became confused. She had already spent the money the shopkeeper had given her, and who would believe her if she repented? If she had not enjoyed the court the Portuguese had paid her and his caresses, why had she accepted his money and why did she go for drives in motor-cars with him and allow him to kiss her?

By the following evening she had forgotten her remorse and, instead of going to the São Pedro Theatre, where the *Rancho dos Patrioticos* were rehearsing, she made her way to the address the Portuguese had given her the night before.

He came to the door to meet her, bowing extravagantly, his face all smiles, unable to conceal his joy. He had been confident she would come. Luiza went in, feeling dazed. She sank into an armchair, half stunned, her hands lying limply on her lap.

At first she had not noticed the informality of his attire, his striped silk pyjamas and his silk kimono. Without waiting for her to recover herself, he seized her in his strong arms, raising her to her feet, and kissed her violently on her mouth, her eyes and her hair. Then he began to undress her, tugging clumsily at her clothes and getting hopelessly confused. At last he got them off and pushed her naked towards a large bed smelling of lavender, with snowy white sheets turned down on each side so as to form a point in the centre.

She lay down, trembling with emotion. By her side was the fat, hairy little man who seemed to have undressed in a flash. She didn't want to remember the rest, only the sound of his voice and the feel of his lips kissing her all over. The same lips, after some hours of pleasure and pain, tried to kiss away the tears which covered the mulatto's face.

"What is it? It's nothing to cry about. . . ."

Luiza didn't answer, but shrank back, feeling the burning body of the Portuguese so close that it seemed to be melting into her.

“ It’s nothing . . . nothing.”

As he lay exhausted with pleasure, his moustache scratching the mulatto’s face, he murmured gently, in a voice that seemed changed :

“ Hell ! You are marvellous. . . .”

And, as if in appreciation, he added : “ Listen here, Luiza, I didn’t know you were a virgin. . . .”

The mulatto said nothing. It seemed as though a whole world separated them.

The Portuguese continued : “ I didn’t know . . . If I had known . . .”

Then he added : “ Perhaps you would like some more money for your fancy dress ?”

Luiza lay motionless, not saying a word.

Seu Lucas’ hands continued to grip her.

On the day following their meeting Luiza pretended she was ill. Her limbs ached all over, and she felt as though she had a temperature, but she soon recovered and returned to her normal life. She had paid dearly for her Cleopatra costume, but the sacrifice she had been obliged to make had already been forgotten. It was fate. She had found no man who had wanted to marry her. It wasn’t done, to marry mulattos. Make one your mistress, yes, and give her children. That was all right. She did as the others of her race did : she gave herself freely, but dreaded the thought of paying for that night with nine months’ pregnancy.

From that time Seu Lucas avoided her. Luiza was amused. If he only knew that she didn’t hate him. She was only worried about her fancy dress.

Night had already fallen as the Rancho dos Patrioticos went slowly down the hill. Crowds lined the walls, leaned

out of windows or stood in doorways, most of them in fancy dress in a riot of colour, playing tambourines, shaking rattles and holding the jets of perfume and ether which were always used at Carnival time . . .

"Here comes the Rancho . . ."

"How beautiful it is . . ."

In front were a group of negroes dressed as Egyptians, waving long golden fans. Behind them came the lantern-bearers, some carrying flaming torches of a greenish colour which gave out a disagreeable smell.

"Here comes the Rancho !"

The splendour was dazzling, and a cry of applause burst forth : "Bravo, Patrioticos. . . . This is the real thing . . . the rest won't have a look in. . . . Bring back the cup to the hill . . . bring us the prize. . . ."

The directors of the procession led the way, dressed in grey frock-coats with grey toppers. . . . At the bottom of the hill horses waited to take the directors.

"Here come the Patrioticos. . . ."

Then followed the kings, princes and soldiers, dressed in golden vestments, covered in imitation jewellery, singing and dancing. The music was pretty and the verses had been written by Lucio. At the gate of their garden, Lucio stood with his father and brothers watching the Rancho on its way to the city to win the prize. The music had been arranged by Lulu. . . . Poor Lulu. How happy he would have been to hear all those hundreds of voices singing words to the music he had composed for them.

Finally, Cleopatra appeared. Six tall negroes dressed as slaves walked before her, carrying a golden canopy embroidered with eagle's wings in glass beads.

My God ! How beautiful Luiza looked !

She was just like a queen. Rhythmically and gracefully she carried the banner of the Rancho which was held up by a golden standard-support, slung around her neck.

People said nobody in Rio was prettier than she. Besides,

who could compete with all her finery? . . . Her golden tunic, rings on her fingers, jewels in her hair and bracelets on her arms. . . . It was dazzling to the eyes. As she descended the hill Luiza received an ovation.

The whole procession was like a dream with all its extravagance of lights, jewels, lanterns, flaming torches and fireworks. The excited and enthusiastic crowd, most of whom lived in shacks and hovels, or temporarily in hospitals, many with sick children, forgot for a moment their misery, hunger and work, in the splendour of the scene. Everyone seemed to move rhythmically as they sang. . . . Half-way down the hill the crowd closed in. "Three cheers for the Standard-bearer!" Luiza turned in the direction from which the last exclamation had come and found herself looking straight into the green eyes of Eurico. She felt ashamed of herself when she remembered Lucas. She had given herself for two contos and had refused Eurico, whom she loved. For days she had been worried to death. The Portuguese had avoided her ever since he had known she was a virgin. So much the better, but Goodness knew whether he hadn't planted his seed in her womb.

What if she were pregnant? thought Luiza, as the Rancho proceeded down the hill, followed by the band of flutes, drums and tambourines. What would become of her? She remembered Marcolina. She also remembered a neighbour who, although married, had no means of supporting her newly-born child and had to take it to the Foundling Home in the Marquez de Abrantes Street.

"Cheers for the Patrioticos!" . . .

They had now almost reached the bottom of the hill.

Well, God would decide her fate, and, drawing herself up, Luiza walked firmly on the cobbled stones, holding the standard tightly to her and singing Lucio's verses :

"The stars, the flowers and women  
Are the loveliest things on earth. . . ."

## THIRD BOOK

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### *DIARY OF IMACULATA*

1st March, 1918.

. . . It is a week now since Father showed the first signs of improvement. He has already begun to go into the workshop to chat, and is now able to walk a little. He can also take his place at the table at meal-times, where, poor fellow, he can only eat those things recommended by the doctor—such tasteless dishes. He grumbles like an ailing child: "Mother, when can I get back into harness? I have had enough of these saltless meals . . . I am tired of eating chicken . . ." He stops abruptly as he complains, and Gilberto looks at him with surprise. Not without reason, for the doctor has prescribed a diet of fish and fowl. Fish costs money, but we have more than enough fowl in the garden. First the chickens. One of them has to be killed every day, but Gilberto never says a word. Is he not trying to save his father's life? Afterwards, when all the chickens have been finished, Mother can only do one thing, kill the hens. Gilberto makes no attempt to save his friends. All he said was: "See, Mother, you can kill any of my hens—Italia Fausta, Lucilia, Esperanza Iris, even Victoria, but don't let me see you doing it, Yes?"

Mother swallowed her reply. It was Gilberto who broke the embarrassing silence. "When Father is better, we shall buy more, won't we?"

Mother could not speak, but from that moment she never allowed any fowl to be served when Gilberto was at the table. That day at dinner, Father understood the look in Gilberto's eyes and changed the meaning of his unfinished sentence: "I am tired of eating chicken—without seasoning."

2nd March, 1918.

The doctor has forbidden Father to do any reading, but this does not stop him from listening eagerly, with arms folded, seated in his canvas chair, to the daily papers which Gilberto still reads out to him every morning. Lucio would have enjoyed returning to his old job of reader, but the trouble is that he is growing weaker and weaker. He is so delicate. I have always thought Lucio would never live long. His hands tremble so and he has a temperature every evening. It is pathetic. He is sick whenever he has to travel in a tram, or in a train or a bus. If he is caught in the sun, he straightway has a headache. The doctor, whose consulting-room is at the chemist's in Frei Caneca Street, where I took him last week, sounded his frail body and, after a lengthy examination, finally placed his head on the boy's chest to listen to his breathing.

Afterwards, when handing me a scribbled prescription in illegible writing, the doctor said in a confidential way :

"The boy has outgrown his strength. What he needs is fresh air in the mountains or by the sea. . . ." Blind doctor, as all doctors are ! If my father had money to pay for a holiday in the mountains or by the sea, would Lucio have had to go to a doctor in a chemist's shop where consultations are free ?

As we left the consulting-room, Lucio naïvely asked : "Why didn't you tell the doctor that we lived in Paula Mattos ?"

"I did tell him."

"Then doesn't the doctor know that Paula Mattos is a mountain, and quite a high one too ?"

Later on, noticing my silence as I walked by his side, carrying the bottle of medicine in my hand, Lucio asked me another question.

"Ima, if mountain air is good, why is it that Paula Mattos kills so many people . . . ?"

I could not answer.

I was growing weary of hearing, in the silence of

my room every night, the cries of ailing children round about.

*3rd March, 1918.*

Lucio matriculated in the second-year grade of his college ; but he has failed to attend on the very first day of the new term. He has started badly. By the general rule of things, perhaps he should not start school so soon. He himself does not complain, but I heard him ask Sá-Virginia : " I am not afraid of losing a year . . . What I am afraid of is starting late. . . . It will be so difficult to catch up."

Afterwards, forgetting the fever which never leaves him now, and the pain which grips his head, he insisted on going to the door to wait for Gilberto. He was crazy to hear his description of his first day at school. Father was more than happy at Gilberto's victory. Although he cares only for his hens and his birds, he has done well in the entrance examinations, even brilliantly. The answers came " pat " on the tip of his tongue and he has succeeded in obtaining one of the best places in the examination list. Lucio was only one who wanted to hear about his brother's first day at college. We were all there. Lucio's impatience, however, was excusable. He was beside himself to know which of his schoolfellows he liked most ; which of the Brothers he liked best ; what he thought of D. João Baptista, who treated all the boys with the tenderness he displayed towards the flowers that grew in the shade of the columns and arches of the cloister. . . .

Of all our tribe, the happiest, without a doubt, as regards Gilberto's first day at college, was Gloria-Helena. For her, it was like a personal victory. She also should have started her course at the Normal School to-day. She has had no luck, although she has studied hard.

Seu Liro once told me privately, in a moment of confidence, that she could have worked much harder. . . . " But ever since she left Dona Chiquinha, she thought

she should help me with the waistcoats and so help the family.

"I used to say to her : ' Gloria, you can help later. . . .' She was deaf to me, and her hands never ceased to ply the needle and thread, learning to make waistcoats, finishing linings, and sewing fronts and buckles.

" ' Go and study,' I would say to her."

Amparo also used to get annoyed : " Gloria, go and prepare yourself for the examinations. . . ."

But she was deaf to our entreaties. Papa, Mother and Sá-Virginia all remained firm in their attitude.

" I lost my job with Dona Chiquinha," she used to say, " and now that I have learned to help Father, I do not wish to lose the habit. . . ."

The intervention of Seu Liro became necessary.

The conversation between them ended all further discussion. He found a solution to the matter. Gloria studied in the mornings and in the afternoons would work with us at the machine. Father fell ill shortly afterwards. There were nights when we thought that the next day would be one of mourning. One by one the apprentices were discharged. Father would say to each one as he was leaving : " When you least expect it I shall be cured, and I shall send for you."

The apprentices were reluctant to leave. They worked without pay in order to help the house that was also theirs. In less than a month they had all but one gone, carrying the little they possessed in suitcases or sacks, and hoping to return shortly. Mother took things very badly. She felt that Father would not last very long, that we would all finish up in poverty as a result, that Henrique would never return, that Lucio would die young. . . .

*9th March, 1918.*

Amparo's birthday.

She awakened to-day surrounded by presents : packets



of pins, bundles of ribbon, a new missal and a book of verses by Auta de Souza—a poetess who died of tuberculosis in the North, and had a knack of talking about God, as if God was her most intimate friend. . . . The present of the book could only have come from Father, because Joaquim's was a gold ring, very fine, with a tourmaline the size of a finger-nail. It was so beautiful that even I was willing to become engaged for a ring like that.

I found Amparo, during lunch, eating fat meat and gristle behind a door. "What is this?" I demanded; and she informed me quietly: "It was Sá-Virginia who taught me this . . . If you wish to remain beautiful throughout life, you must eat fat and gristle behind a door. . . ."

*10th March, 1918.*

Zacarias did not come yesterday, as is usual, to compliment Amparo on her birthday; but he had not forgotten it. This morning a messenger appeared with an enormous parcel addressed to Amparo. There was general excitement. From out of the paper parcel came a bundle of old lace, slightly yellow with age. Inside was a note scribbled by Zacarias. "This veil was used by my grandmother and my mother when they were wed. Perhaps you would like to use it on the day of your marriage. Congratulations for yesterday. Zacarias."

Amparo was so moved she did not utter a word. So were we.

*13th March, 1918.*

Lucio has a high temperature. He coughs and coughs. I am in despair. We all watch his face, so thin, and his eyes so deep set. . . . The doctor, as usual, told me: "He needs mountain air." Father, who has passed whole nights in pain, will not leave Lucio's side. I think he is fonder of him than all the rest of us.

15th March, 1918.

Luiza has gone out to buy lights.

Mother had ordered it. She washes them in lemon, frying them afterwards with onions and chipped potatoes.

Luiza deceived the butcher.

"The lights are for the dog. . . ."

The "dog" is the whole family, which can afford to eat meat once a week only, on Sundays, because it is so dear. . . .

Amparo made a joke about it.

"We shall finish up with the night police, chasing cats in the street. . . ."

Everybody laughed except Mother.

16th March, 1918.

I see that I have written almost nothing about Zacarias in my diary. Well, I have about as much to say about God. Nevertheless God is present in all my thoughts.

18th March, 1918.

The daily papers are full of news about our sailors who are *en route* to Europe to fight with the Allies. Some days ago they arrived at Dakar in their warships. A telegraphed item upset us. An epidemic has broken out in Dakar. Almost the whole of the crews of our ships have become ill. Among them is an acquaintance of ours, a sailor only twenty-one years old. I went to see his father to-day. He came climbing the stairs slowly, reading the first page of the paper, where, in big print, appears the headline: "Epidemic in Dakar. . . ."

20th March, 1918.

Luiza is not the same person since the Carnival. She has gone too far, I fear. They say she is eaten with remorse at having gone to Sá Carola's house, with Herculano lying dead on the table, in the Cleopatra costume she wore in the Rancho. I cannot believe it. As far as I know, she always took things most seriously. On Ash Wednesday I found her in the garden making a bonfire of dried branches and dead leaves.

"What are you doing?" I asked her.

She faced round and eyed me.

"Wait and see."

Luiza threw on the fire her expensive fancy dress, together with her imitation pearls and false jewellery. The silk dress began to crackle and here and there flames shot up. The glass beads spat out of the mass, accompanied by the noise of leaves and dry branches being consumed in the flames.

"Have you gone mad, Luiza? Why have you thrown all this costly stuff on the fire?"

"I ought to be in it myself," she said.

Father appeared at the door of the dining-room and cried out in an alarmed voice: "What sort of a fire is this?" Luiza left me and ran towards the middle of the garden: "It is nothing, Father. . . . I am just burning some things . . ." Then she returned to where she had first seen me and repeated: "The one who should throw petrol over her body and then jump into the fire, is I. . . ."

She pointed to the flames getting bigger and bigger, and giving forth a smell of singeing silk, of melting metal and burning leaves.

"And I have, Ima, really I have . . . I have thrown the Luiza of the Carnival into the flames . . . and it is she that is burning. . . . Look!"

*21st March, 1918.*

Panizoni sings in a café, I don't know where, possibly in the do Lavradio Street. He sings operatic arias to a public of drunkards, taking their ale and nuts. They say he is warmly applauded. The same audience applauds the other items in the programme, among which is a dog dressed in a coat and top-hat, standing on its hind legs and doing incredible acrobatics, and a conjuror who produces birds from an empty bag.

Panizoni takes the applause seriously. Glory ceases to be glory when it is the means of killing hunger.

Panizoni knows this and is just as much intoxicated as those who applaud. Only he does not eat the nuts.

*22nd March, 1918.*

Joaquim has brought us very bad news. Eurico has just been sent to the leper colony at São Cristovão. I shall never forget the pallor which covered the face of Luiza on hearing the news. I thought she was going to faint. But she is a woman of fibre. She leaned against the door of the room which overlooks the kitchen, biting her lips till she drew blood, and listened . . . listened . . . Well did we know he was the son of a leper. He had been sent to be reared far away from his parents, and the doctors had judged him to be free from contagion. . . . Of his mother he had only the memory of a tall and lean form, often with her arms extended towards him from behind a glass wall in the ante-room of a hospital. The doctors had guaranteed him to be completely sound, cured. But what do doctors know? Take Father, Lucio . . . what have they done for them? Nothing!

Joaquim revealed everything regarding Eurico and said that peculiar symptoms began to appear. After a time, he perceived that parts of his body became insensible to cold and heat.

He did not finish speaking because Luiza, who had tried to hide her face, wet with tears, by turning to the wall, now began to cry openly.

This afternoon, after lunch, I went into Lucio's room, where, poor little fellow, he had been in bed since Sunday. . . . He had a higher temperature, not very high . . . but I stopped in the doorway and with difficulty suppressed a strong desire to laugh. There was Panizoni, preoccupied in entertaining the patient. He was wearing a large night-dress belonging to Mother, waving his arms in the middle of the room, with two pillows stuffed up the front to enlarge the size of his chest, and striking all sorts of ridiculous attitudes. Seeing me enter, and still enveloped in a quilt

that draped his ample shoulders like a mantle, Panizoni immediately informed me : " You come to spoil it . . . I am imitating a ' prima donna.' "

I saw that Lucio was not the only spectator. Father, with the child's feverish hands between his lean and yellow hands, was also enjoying the scene. . . .

Three children playing at grown-ups . . .

*23rd March, 1918.*

Luiza brought me a parcel.

" Ima, would you like to do me a little favour ? "

" What is it, then ? "

" Let me see that paper on which Joaquim wrote the name of Eurico and the hospital where he may be found in São Cristovão. Joaquim gave me the information, " explained the mulatto, " and I have bought some sweets for the poor fellow. . . . "

I was very moved.

" You want me to write his address here on the top of the parcel . . . ? "

I did as she desired.

She said regretfully : " At a time like this I feel very ashamed at not being able to read or write . . . "

I think she was overcome.

At this moment Zacarias appeared. He had come to help father and Panizoni to dismount the " theatre. " It had been there for some weeks now, with an accumulation in the corner of lamps and the remains of a quilt that had served as a drop curtain. . . . A friend of ours, Godfather to Gloria-Helena and the owner of a furniture shop in Catete Street, had offered to buy all the new planks, with which many things could be made.

*24th March, 1918.*

No other course was open. We went, this Palm Sunday, to fetch Aunt Thereza from hospital. Where were we to find the money to pay the monthly fees ? Well might Dr.

Juliano Moreira wish to interpose with : " There is no need to take her from the sanatorium. . . . I shall attend to the payment . . ." Father did not wish to abuse such generosity. And this morning, directly after Mass, we went, to bring her out. She seemed cured. She replied to every question put to her in a voice that was extremely weak. At times she would remain silent with pain and put her arms to her chest as if nursing a baby.

With the money from the material of the theatre, Father paid part of the overdue account, and engaged a taxi to bring Aunt Thereza to Paula Mattos.

I went with him to find an open motor-car. Aunt Thereza sat quietly with Father and me. The sun was shining so beautifully . . . As we passed by the front of the church of Lapa, it was about the time of the end of the eleven o'clock Mass. An endless stream of people poured out of the three doors, holding up the traffic. Women, children and men carried waving palm-leaves, long, green and perfumed. Our car remained motionless, surrounded by a human sea of waving palms. A young girl, seeing Aunt Thereza sitting very quietly between the two of us, threw, with a rapid movement, a leaf of a consecrated palm, saying as she did so : " This is for the young lady with the face of a saint. . . ."

The green fragment fell on the lap of Aunt Thereza, who never moved.

*25th March, 1918.*

A letter came from Henrique. With it were two pages of linen paper, on which a familiar hand had traced lines and scribbled the music of a waltz. The letter told me :

" I entered a bar with some friends last night, for a drink of iced coconut milk. Suddenly, the pianist began to play a waltz very well known to us. Leaving my seat I ran to the piano, and asked the pianist quietly : ' Where did you learn that waltz ? Excuse me,' I said, ' but that waltz is very much like another composed by a friend of my

family and who has since died.' The pianist stopped playing. He rose and rapidly went through a bundle of sheets he had on top of the piano. From the bundle he took out the two sheets which are enclosed and opened them under my nose. 'Is it possible that your friend is the composer of this waltz that I was playing?' he asked. I recognized immediately the hand of Lulu, who had written in large characters, 'Waltz without a name'; in the corner, on the right was his signature in full, and on the other side, 'To my friend Juco Nascimento, with memories of our friendship.' I was astonished. How was it that this waltz, dedicated to Juco, came to be here in this little bar in Recife? The pianist told a story that does Juco little credit. He told me that he was for some time in Manáós, and that one night Juco, who was accustomed to take his daily beer in the café where he was playing, came to him with the music and said: 'Look here, I have brought something with me which perhaps will interest you . . . but for me it has no value.' And he gave him the music which I now send you and which in turn was given me by the pianist. What do you think of this behaviour of Juco? Ingratitude of the worst kind, eh? I think it better not to tell Father this story. It may make him sad. As for me, I have dropped Juco from my circle of friends . . ."

As yet, I have not done the same, but I have not told Father what has happened. It would embitter him. He likes saying: "If there should be one person in the world that I cannot like, I would rather die."

*26th March, 1918.*

Tuesday is Holy Week. Since Friday last no meat has been eaten at home. We are preparing ourselves for Communion next Sunday. Joaquim has a habit of talking to Aunt Thereza. He likes to be with her while she is lost in preoccupation. He told me to-day: "Aunt Thereza reminds me of my mother. . . . She also ended like this." He said no more, ashamed of the confession he had made to

me, embarrassed at having thus opened the door to his past.

*28th March, 1918.*

I was on the point of going out to take Gilberto and Lucio to the ceremony of the Washing of Feet in the church of Saint Antonio, when the post brought me a sealed envelope. Inside, I found a note of 100 milreis and a card, without signature, on which was written: "I know that things in your house are not going well. Would you like to accept this money to buy fruit for the sick ones?" I recognized the handwriting immediately as that of Marcolina. I put the envelope, card and note into my bag and descended the hill with the children. I entered the church, which was in darkness, its altars covered with red cloth, continually thinking of the kindness of Marcolina. Should I accept the money? The ceremony of the washing of feet had no further significance for me. Those twelve children seated on a long form, dressed in black tunics and without shoes on their feet, which were washed by the Fathers in water contained in silver bowls and afterwards dried with spotless towels of fine linen. How confused it all was in my eyes!—the smoke of the silver incense burners, the flickering of the burning candles on the altars with their images hidden under black draperies! Should I accept the one hundred milreis or not? I was reminded of many things—I am always reminding myself of many things, good or tragic—while the music of the organ played in my ears and the perfume of the incense assailed my nostrils. I remembered that the butcher demanded his overdue account, threatening to stop all further credit even for purchases of offal. . . . This note of one hundred milreis would, perhaps, be useful for something. Returning from the church, I deceived the whole family, affirming that I had found the note in Father's pocket. Everyone believed me. Father is so absent-minded . . . and so we succeeded . . . in what? In continuing our credit with the butcher.



1st April, 1918.

I did not remember that it was the first of April. Sá-Virginia saw me working very early and said in my ear : " Ima, do you know who is outside there wishing to speak to you ? "

" Who ? "

" Zacarias," she replied in a whisper.

I said nothing.

" Why does he not come in ? "

" No, he wants to tell you something first . . . and told me to tell you . . . Quickly."

I got up and went to the terrace. The sun shining fiercely was all that I saw.

Sá-Virginia, who had followed after me, broke into a smile.

" April Fool . . . April Fool . . . It is the first of April . . . "

I could not be angry and returned hurriedly to my sewing-machine. I passed the entire day thinking about it. Why did Sá-Virginia bring Zacarias into it? Why did she not choose some other name?

2nd April, 1918.

Miquelina is now in Amazonas. She may, perhaps, have become rich, but she is more than likely to have been taken ill with malaria or some other incurable disease. But come what may, a letter from her always arrives, written by Juco. There was, however, no news in the last one, except that Juco had escaped being eaten by a jacaré, and that he had had the opportunity of seeing a water-snake killing itself as it slowly digested an ox. Miquelina never enquires about her daughter. She does not write the letters, but if she could write, I wager there would be a line asking, for instance, " Have you heard anything of Marcolina? How is she ? "

3rd April, 1918.

Gloria-Helena asked me for a day off.

"I have a very important thing to do," she explained.

Amparo added her weight to the request. . . . "Very important," she confided.

Both of them had an air of secrecy. I did not question them. I think Father also is party to the secret. I let Gloria-Helena go and saw her disappear into the garden, to the rendezvous of the editors of *The Swallow*, which to-day had been completely abandoned, seeing that Lucio was so weak he could hardly walk. He consoled himself by reading his books, which he never forsakes. Father, also, had gone a number of times to attend to the business of editing. . . .

4th April, 1918.

The mystery continues to deepen.

Gloria-Helena asked permission to be free another day and again spent it in the editing business. I badly wanted to ask questions, but kept silent. I should have liked to go to the editor's den to discover the plot. Amparo might well smile.

"You appear to be made of ice, Ima. Why do you not enquire just a little what Gloria is doing?"

I continued sewing, without lifting my head, but Amparo still wanted to talk.

"Then you have no curiosity to know at all . . ."

I interrupted her, "No, Amparo, I like mystery. It is very beautiful."

She sighed, and spent the rest of the day in silence.

5th April, 1918.

"Come, come, Gloria! Another day's holiday?"

Plainly she was embarrassed as she looked at me, wheedling . . .

"Only half a day . . ." and without waiting to know whether I agreed or not, she had run to the terrace and crossed the garden.

All of them had the air of conspirators. Lucio was the only one not interested in the flights of Gloria. Perhaps

he had not noticed them, being seated always in the rocking-chair with an open book in front of him.

Gloria and Father, in so far as I was concerned, were preparing a surprise. Perhaps they were typing another number of *The Swallow*, to make Lucio happy.

Amparo took the business in which Gloria was engaged so seriously that for two days she abandoned the family circle in the evening.

Joaquim, who came to see her every night, was also roped in, contented to sit beside his loved one. While Amparo sewed with agile hands he conversed with her in a low voice, uttering a lot of empty nonsense, devoid of meaning and often without the least trace of wit, which, however, never prevented them from laughing. Definitely, if to be engaged is not only "that" but to end up like "that," then I prefer to have a white funeral.

7th April, 1918.

The papers are full of the war . . . but all our thoughts are of that black spot, in Dakar, where Brazilian sailors are dying of the "grippe." D. João Baptista came to visit Lucio. They talked for a good two hours.

I remember and could almost hear the Brother saying : "Even the trees which give no shade nor fruit should be loved. People should love all living things."

8th April, 1918.

They say that our sailors, who were sent to die like heroes in the European war, are finishing up by dying for no purpose in a dirty African port.

9th April, 1918.

There was no mystery. I was mistaken. It was not concerned with another number of *The Swallow*. Father searched through Lucio's notebooks for his poems. He put them in order. Gloria-Helena undertook to copy them on the typewriter : each poem on a separate white sheet. The sheets, collected together, were then bound in

a green cardboard cover, on which the name of the first poem appeared, written by Amparo, namely, "Temples." This afternoon after lunch they gave Lucio the surprise of seeing his poems collected together in a veritable book. Lucio gulped, but there was a look of happiness on his lean face.

*12th April, 1918.*

Lucio will definitely be unable to attend class this year. The doctor, who came to see Father this morning, examined him and pronounced his sentence.

*13th April, 1918.*

Nobody knew my decision. I acted alone. I had taken leave of my music teacher, Dona Pia. I went to see her to-day in her little room in Rezende Street, where, surrounded by the portraits of musical celebrities, she gave her lessons. Dona Pia did not agree with my decision. "If you cannot pay," she said, "I shall teach you for nothing," adding wistfully: "You have so much promise, Ima."—"Thank you, Dona Pia," I had deceived her in saying that it was not a question of money. . . . "It is a question of time, Dona Pia, I have so many waistcoats to do. . . ."

Dona Pia cut me short: "I fear the city will eventually be deprived of listening to the piano. Nobody wishes to study, not even for nothing. Why? Why? Because it is all the gramophone now, nothing but gramophones!"

*19th April, 1918.*

Father has gone out. Under his arm in a paper packet he carried Lucio's volume of verses, typewritten by Gloria-Helena. He informed Mother where he was going. I saw him start off, very happy in his finest suit and his finest shirt and his finest tie. Gloria-Helena kissed him as he was leaving and said: "I think you are going to an engagement with President Wenceslau." Three hours later Father returned with the same happy bearing, but without the packet under his arm. He entered by the workshop, and

once inside, called out : " Lucio ! " Lucio, who was in a corner, half reclining in his chair, was reading a novel by Eça de Queiroz.

" Lucio ! "

The boy went to meet him.

Father seated himself close to our machines, with Lucio standing between his knees.

" Lucio, I have a surprise for you."

Mother came to the door of the room with her face aglow.

" I have just been visiting the Count de Afonso Celso," began Father proudly, as if addressing a person more important than the President Wenceslau . . . Lucio looked at him in surprise . . .

" You have been to see the Count de Afonso Celso? Surely not ! "

Father explained the mystery. He had asked Gloria to copy Lucio's verses on the typewriter, so that he might obtain the opinion of a reliable man regarding them. He remembered having mentioned the matter to the Desembargador Aquino, his friend, who had paid him a visit. The judge had disillusioned him. " Chico, you live in a world of dreams. . . . Do you not realize that poetry is not a profession for the poor man?" " But," Father insisted, " do you not know one famous poet who would give his opinion on Lucio's verses?" The Judge conceded : " There was a colleague of mine . . . the Count de Afonso Celso," and being afraid of introducing Father to his old University colleague, he added immediately, " I have not seen him for some years and I think he will not remember me any more."

Father did not press the subject further. He changed the conversation. He even agreed with the Judge that poetry was not a profession for poor people. And to-day, putting on his best attire, Father had presented himself at the Count's house. The servant asked him :

" Whom shall I announce ? "

Serenely, Father took a visiting-card from his pocket and gave it to the solemn-faced butler, who vanished with it between his fingers.

A few minutes afterwards the Count de Afonso Celso rose, just as he was in his study, wrapped in a black silk dressing-gown.

"My dear Aquino," he said, opening his arms in a gesture of comradeship.

The Count was nonplussed. Who was this impostor who had the courage to present himself under another's name? What did it all mean? Father's calm did not desert him. He explained who he was. He said that he was the Desembargador Aquino's tailor. And that it was he who had spoken of a University colleague, to-day a famous poet and author of a sonnet on his own sick daughter which Father knew by heart. It was on account of this same sonnet that Father had taken the liberty of coming to see him, since the Desembargador had refused to introduce him, in order to ask his opinion regarding the verses written by his son, who was still a child. Father stopped there in his story but told me the end of it afterwards when Lucio had gone to bed. "I said to the Count, I have an ailing son, a son who writes verses. You, as a father, will understand my position. I would like you to tell me whether or not I should continue to encourage my son with his verses, whether he is a poet or not." The Count de Afonso Celso, I think, was moved. He asked Father to be seated and called a servant to bring coffee.

"Leave the book . . ." he said.

And while the servant served coffee, the Count added, with a pleasant smile, "I shall read the verses. Leave me your address and later I shall write to your son. . . ."

*22nd April, 1918.*

Father had passed a terrible night. His whole body was shaken by his hiccups. Twisted in pain, his face was alarming. Luiza dressed herself quickly, throwing a shawl

over her shoulders. Mother instructed her : " Knock on Lucas' door, and ask him to ring up the doctor." She became pale on hearing the order.

" But, Mother, I . . . "

She hesitated.

Suddenly I remembered that, since Carnival, Luiza had avoided going to see Lucas, and when we went out together to church and suddenly met the Portuguese, she would turn her face in the other direction so as not to greet him.

Mother continued, anxiously, " Hurry, Luiza . . . call the doctor."

" I shall run to the chemist," said Luiza.

Father groaned loudly. The chemist's shop was some distance away, but Lucas' shop was on the corner. . . . I offered to go with Luiza, and we dashed off, running through the garden and down, breathlessly, side by side, to Paula Mattos Street. Hurry, Luiza, hurry, Luiza . . . I stopped on the corner, just by Lucas' shop. Turning to Luiza, I said to her quickly, " It will not be necessary for you to ask anything of your Lucas . . . I shall knock . . . " With my fist, I knocked on the heavy wooden door, calling out " Lucas ! . . . Lucas ! "

My shouts echoed in the stony silence of the badly lighted road. There came from below the whistle of the night guard warning robbers that they were approaching. . . . Luiza leaned up against a lamp-post, and the light falling on her face made it even more pallid.

" Lucas ! . . . Lucas ! "

I knocked desperately now with open hand on the closed door. A thunderous voice was heard inside the sleeping house. " Who the devil is there ? "

" I, Lucas."

" Who ? "

" I . . . Imaculata. Come quickly, Lucas ! "

I saw one of the rooms in the top storey lighted up and heard again the thunderous voice exclaiming : " Coming immediately, coming immediately." At that moment

Luiza came out of the dark shadow and taking hold of the two corners of her shawl, rather deliberately, I thought—and I noticed also that her hands were trembling—she drew closer to me. Heavy footsteps could be heard within. Lucas was coming down. Now he was opening the door. He had hastily thrown on a red dressing-gown decorated with a design of spreading branches, which exposed to view his fat legs enclosed in striped pyjamas.

“What is it, girl?”

He had lit the bar to see his way.

Anxiously, I explained to him that Father was taken ill.

“I came to telephone the doctor,” I told him.

“Poor old Chico,” murmured the Portuguese, showing the way in. “Enter, my dear, and use the telephone as you wish.”

He directed me to the counter, on which, alongside a miscellany of dishes full of fried fish covered over by mosquito netting, I found the telephone. I saw then that Luiza had followed in my footsteps as if to protect me. While I was asking for the number, I heard the Portuguese saying, almost through his teeth, “How are you, Luiza!” Luiza remained mute. The operator asked for the number. I repeated it and from the other end of the 'phone heard the bell ringing, ringing . . .

Lucas grew more friendly. “No reply to the number?” he remarked, and with the air of one wishing to forget the sadness of the occasion, continued: “These doctors sleep heavily, heavier than I do.”

I called out anxiously into the mouth of the telephone, “Operator, please . . . please . . . it is an urgent case. . . .” The operator, in an infuriatingly calm voice that froze me into desperation, answered: “No reply . . . no reply . . . I'll continue ringing.”

Luiza had remained standing, almost concealed in her shawl of crochet wool. Lucas advanced towards the counter. He was coming to relieve me of the telephone. “Leave it to me, I will get the number.”



I do not remember for certain what happened. Perhaps Luiza thought Lucas was going to seize me, for she shouted out : " Don't you touch her, do you hear ? Don't you touch her ! "

I was about to say something, when from the other end of the telephone I heard a man's voice. " Is that Doctor Figueredo ? This is Imaculata Marianni speaking. Father, my father, has been taken ill. He has become worse. Could you visit him ? Could you come as far as the house ? " And then that inexplicable scene came before my eyes. Luiza, her eyes almost starting out of her head, was transfixing Seu Lucas with her gaze, while Lucas stood twisting his moustache, obviously very much disturbed. Luiza was mad, completely crazy. What did she think Lucas had intended to do ? And, of all times, on such an occasion ? I heard the doctor promise to come quickly, as quickly as possible, hung up the telephone and turned towards Lucas. " Many thanks," I said, " and please excuse my disturbing you."

I walked to the door, followed by the shopkeeper, who seemed to be very ill at ease. " I hope and trust Chico will recover," I heard him say, as he closed the door on my footsteps and Luiza's, who, with me, began to climb the road. Hardly had the door closed than Luiza blurted out : " Heavens ! I was greatly afraid of that monster."

" Why, Luiza ? "

The girl touched my arm : " Ima, that monster is capable of anything . . . "

Father's illness preoccupied me more than the incident at the shop, but Luiza must have a reason for hating the fat Portuguese. One day, perhaps, I shall ask her the reason, but not to-day. . . .

*23rd April, 1918.*

The doctor came as he had promised. Not immediately, but five hours afterwards. It was getting well on into the day, and by the clock it was nine in the morning. The

sick man could die before the doctor would sacrifice his sleep to visit his patient on the hill. Father experienced a terrible day, moaning and in a fever. . . . Before lunch I ran to St. George's Church, bearing in mind that this was the saint's day. What a crowd of people there was ! The church was lighted and the floor covered with cinnamon leaves. For more than half an hour I knelt before the image of the saint, who was mounted on a horse, both of natural size, with the dragon at his foot, pierced through with a lance of pure gold. I asked him to save Father, even at the sacrifice of my own life. Now, at this very hour of the night, after I have seen Father sleeping more peacefully, a stupid fear assails me. Did the saint hear my request ? Would I die before I had really lived ? It must be tragic to die before twenty. Why did I make such a request ? I could have promised St. George, if he cured Father, a candle the size of myself, or that I would kneel on grains of corn for so many hours per week ! I could have promised him one hundred masses. . . .

*30th April, 1918.*

Lucio had a high fever. Father very ill. How dreadful !

*1st May, 1918.*

I went to-day to the church of das Neves. Luiza was with me. I noticed she was not wearing a white veil on her head, and that she had no blue sash of the Children-of-Mary. "What is this, Luiza ?" I said to her. "You should not have put on a black cloak."

Luiza murmured : "Ima, I am no longer worthy of wearing a white veil. I was going to tell you something more, but have not the courage." I was afraid Luiza had done something she dared not tell me. The image of Marcolina came into my mind.

6th May, 1918.

Sá Carola appeared.

"May I come in with my friend?"

And with that she entered.

"Do not be alarmed by the visitor I am bringing."

And she led in a monkey, the size of Gilberto, with a face expressively human.

"I want you to meet Manduco . . ."

We all stopped working to stare at this animal which was so human.

"Manduco," ordered Sá Carola, "shake hands with the young ladies."

I shrank back and so did my sisters.

"You need not be afraid," observed the confectioner.

"Manduco harms nobody."

The monkey stretched one of his paws in front of us as it seated itself on its haunches, its snout opening wide in an idiotic smile.

"Manduco, shake hands with the ladies, come along, behave yourself." There was no escape, and we shook hands with the monkey. Father appeared at the door of the workroom. Sá Carola immediately gave it a new order.

"Manduco, shake hands with the young man." At that very moment Gilberto arrived. He had come running through the garden and had entered the room without noticing either the animal or Sá Carola. Running up to Father, he kissed his hand as usual with "A blessing, Father . . ."

The monkey imitated him and instead of shaking Father's hand, kissed it.

9th May, 1918.

Panizoni, to make himself agreeable to me, sang a dirge every other day at the Church of Neves.

To-day, on leaving the service of Nones, a woman I do not know remarked: "I have never known the Month of Mary to be so beautiful," and, with a sigh, continued: "I used to come for the ceremony. I come now to hear

the boy who sings in the choir . . . he brings back memories of my days at the opera."

Shaking her silvered head, she smiled : " Perhaps you do not believe me, because you see me so ill-attired, but once I had money and a box at the opera. . . ."

Sadly, and hardly voicing her words : " Of my moneyed days I have no regrets, nor of my house in Botafogo ; nor of my horse-drawn carriage ; nor of the night when the Emperor came to dine with me. . . . He was a handsome man . . . with a very white beard, a quiet voice, good eyes. I still hear the rustle of the Empress's black silk bombazine."

She crossed herself.

" I have, my dear, only a great longing for the operas which I used to hear at the Lirico. . . ."

*14th May, 1918.*

It was medicine time.

" Drink, Father, it is four in the afternoon."

Stretched out on the bed, he looked at me like an angry child. " When will the day come, Ima, that you forget my medicine, eh ? " I gave him a full spoonful of a sticky, dark-coloured liquid which he swallowed without further comment.

Just then the door of the room was flung wide open and Lucio entered with a letter in his hand. He seemed to be another person, without a trace of weakness in his face or in his legs. He came in calling : " Father ! Father ! "

Seating himself on the bed he exclaimed : " The Count has written . . . the Count has written . . . "

Incredibly agitated by an emotion that affected his speech, he continued : " Father, it doesn't seem true . . . look, I can hardly believe it . . . look, Ima . . . "

He showed us a letter bearing the address of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute. Father took it in his lean hands, devouring in one glance that famous signature. . . .

"And so . . . Lucio," was all he could say ; nevertheless he was exceedingly happy.

"Father, I feel like the frog who was jealous of the bull. . . ."

I intervened : "Very well, Lucio, lest you burst, let us read the letter." Amparo, Gloria and Mother had now joined us in the room, excited by the news.

Father made himself comfortable in bed, but the tone of Lucio's voice changed when he asked : "What is the matter, are you feeling ill ?"—"Ill, who said I was ill ? I am better. Now let us read the letter . . ." He certainly no longer thought of his illness nor of his debts, nor of his heavy responsibilities, for now there had appeared a glory, the rare prize of the few, for there in his sick-room was the letter from the poet Count addressed to Lucio.

*15th May, 1918.*

I read and read again the letter written on the note-paper of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute.

I opened my eyes wide, to see whether I was not deceiving myself or dreaming. There was one part I specially liked which said, "The poet has talent and his imagery is beautiful. When with greater experience he has perfected his art, there will be someone whose name many will know by heart."

*17th May, 1918.*

Lucio will not be able to return to college as soon as was thought. He has already lost the months of March, April, May and June. D. João Baptista came to see him to-day. I saw them talking volubly on the terrace under the shade of the cashew trees.

As he was leaving, Lucio insisted on accompanying him to the door. He did so. The evening wind chilled him. At the very hour I am writing these lines, Lucio is delirious, talking aloud. If there is an angel for children who suffer, that angel must be deaf or does not know the address of our house.

18th May, 1918.

Lucio's forehead was burning to the touch of my hand.

20th May, 1918.

Lucio is still in bed. Dr. Figueredo came to see him and recommended, as did the other of the chemist's shop in Frei Caneca Street: "This child must leave Rio." When and where is the money coming from, where?

22nd May, 1918.

On my way to the Novena I passed near the shop of Fioravanti. I espied him within and saw him bent over, with a shoe gripped between his knees, in front of a bench full of nails, hammers, twine, a wax candle and awls. If I am not mistaken, Fioravanti has taken to whistling the Flower Song out of "Carmen." . . . It is a year now since I saw him trilling like that.

25th May, 1918.

Fioravanti came to fetch his records.

Said he: "I have been in mourning for more than a year."

I myself went to find all the packages, carefully tied, in a corner of the sitting-room, near my piano.

Father, out of the depths of his bed, was overjoyed with the visit and the news: "Very good, Fioravanti. . . . I knew you could not spend the rest of your life without such good company."

Fioravanti stopped in the middle of the room and passed his hand over his face: "That is so, Chico, you are right. I am getting old . . . I am losing my memory bit by bit. Already I find it difficult to remember the correct passages of all my dead ones." He sighed. "Yes, I am getting old, Chico. . . . So I remembered that only my music could revive them in my mind, only my music. . . ."

Walking a few steps and leaning against a piece of furniture, he faced round towards Father's bed.

"For that reason, Chico, and so that I may be reminded

of the forms of my departed. . . .” And with a look of regret on his face, elongated by his white locks, he added : “ I am also afraid of forgetting the face of Garibaldi.”

He shook his white head : “ Old age, you realize? Old age . . . .”

*2nd June, 1918.*

This morning Mother stopped in front of the blind girl's house to ask a casual question. They asked her to enter. She did so. She has a special affection for the blind girl, who spends the entire day sewing sacks, helping her mother. The latter is a Portuguese woman, stout and small, with affable gestures. The two live in a front room of a house, sleeping, working and eating there, sewing up to late hours of the night, heavy sacks which they sell for a matter of two or three farthings. The Portuguese never complained of her fate, nor of having a child blind since birth. She always said : “ Work and health we never lack. . . .” Mother, who also never complains, mentioned on that morning's visit, I don't know why, the sickness in the family, the three of us making clothes, Henrique sending money from Recife. All this, however, is so little in view of the mounting bills and growing children. And as the Portuguese woman had said that they never lacked work, Mother offered to help them.

The mother of the blind girl lost no time. “ You would like to help, Dona Josefa, you would really? Then here are 500 bags . . . Two vintens each one. . . . Would you like to do them? The men at the mill will send for them the day after to-morrow, and when they do not send, then we carry them on our heads up to the mill, in Rua Sant' Anna.”

Mother did not hesitate, but decided to make bags also and came with the news to me. I tried to dissuade her.

“ But, my old dear,” I said, “ it is madness. . . . You already have enough to do, the house, the children, and father and Lucio ill.”

She was deaf to me and replied :

“I do not wish your father to know anything . . .”

And turning towards Amparo and Gloria-Helena, who had heard the conversation, she said angrily, in a manner foreign to her : “I shall kill the one who blabs, do you hear?”

I almost laughed. Mother, who was not even capable of killing a hen, making speeches of such violence.

*5th June, 1918.*

Every time I pass in front of the “Owl” house, I try to see if I can distinguish Inacia behind the garden railings. And I never omit saying good day to her, quickly, almost clandestinely, fearing lest Dona Chiquinha should by chance discover the secret between me and the old negress. Inacia knows that I go to mass every Sunday at nine at Neves, and stands near the great door of the ancient mansion as if awaiting me. Sometimes a whole week will pass while she still looks out for me to wave good day. I long to call her and to tell her the news. I think Inacia is the only old negress who is still a child, being content, unlike others, not to tell stories but to listen to them.

*7th June, 1918.*

Mother has cleaned out the large room in the basement. There, every afternoon, assisted by Luiza and Sá-Virginia, she plies the long needles and twine, sewing the bags one after another.

This cannot go on.

I would rather spend the whole of my nights at the machine, bidding good-bye to my books and the piano, than see her, so stout and already so fatigued, pricking her fingers as she sews the crude material of the bags, made of evil-smelling canvas, and piling them one on top of the other as they are finished.

*10th June, 1918.*

Manduco is now one of the family as much as Milton. We look upon him and talk to him as if he were a human being. Sá Carola, yesterday, said to me quite seriously :



"Ima, don't you think that Manduco ought to be baptized?" And calmly she added, "Because you know he has a soul. More so than many Christians. And let me tell you, in secret, he is more of a companion than Herculano, whom God has taken into Heaven. . . ."

*12th June, 1918.*

I was in the basement helping Mother, Sá-Virginia and Luiza sewing bags. Suddenly there was Aunt Thereza standing in the doorway, with a quiet look in her eyes. "What are you all doing?" she enquired.

Mother became frightened.

"Oh, it is nothing. Now, Thereza, you go and rest yourself upstairs."

Before another word was spoken, Aunt Thereza had seated herself in an old chair and had taken a piece of sacking, doubled in two, ready for sewing, and placed it on her knees.

"I, also, know how to sew," she said.

Mother did not know what to do. Perhaps it would be some distraction for Aunt Thereza.

When I left the basement, there were four slowly sewing the sacks.

*16th June, 1918.*

I spent the afternoon very anxiously. Amparo and Gloria-Helena amused themselves, while sewing, telling each other the things they had heard.

I knew that, down underneath my workroom, far from the eyes of Father, who for more than a week had not left his bed, and far from Lucio, who, ill, sat in a rocking-chair reading his books, there were four creatures sewing canvas bags without stopping.

*30th June, 1918.*

Those four who work every afternoon, there below in the basement, rob me of my sleep. What can be done to put an end to their toil? What can be done to drive away the shadow that is growing in intensity on Mother's

face? What can be done to prevent the poor hands of Aunt Thereza having monotonously to open up the brutish cloth with her yellowish fingers? What can I do? What can I do?

*3rd July, 1918.*

Lucas had the boldness to demand payment of his overdue accounts. He thinks people do not pay because they do not wish to do so.

*4th July, 1918.*

Sitting in a corner of the dining-room near the window, with the rays of the sun casting his gold over them, I saw this afternoon, Lucio, Manduco and Milton. A sick child, a monkey and a blind bird. Three tragic images. The most unhappy was not the monkey, so like a man without being a man; not the bird that could not see, but rather the sick child who was denied the right of being like other boys.

*7th July, 1918.*

There is only one thing to do, sell my piano.

I consulted Mother regarding it. She placed her hands to her head and exclaimed: "You are mad. Don't do that." I stopped my ears. I went myself to Lucas' telephone and spoke to the firm of Artur Napoleão, informing him of the nature of the business, in an undertone, speaking almost in the mouth of the apparatus so that no one would hear me saying: "A Bechstein piano, almost new . . ." giving our address. They are coming to see me next week. Never mind, when Father is better we shall buy another.

*10th July, 1918.*

As soon as the piano is sold, I shall send Lucio to Friburgo. If he should die there on top of the mountain he shall be nearer the stars. . . .

*12th July, 1918.*

I was astonished at the price they offered me. The man had looked at me in a rather apologetic manner, saying, "You said the piano was second-hand . . . but

this piano is new, no older than three years . . . And he offered me almost double the amount I had paid in instalments. I closed the business immediately, enchanted with the financial success of my proposal, completely dazzled. Father, who continues to be so weak, listened to the conversation without a word. They will take my piano away in four days' time.

13th July, 1918.

Zacarias showed me half a dozen of his drawings in charcoal. All of them revealed the features of the same woman. If that woman exists, I hate her; if she does not exist, I am unhappy because all the women imagined by Zacarias are utterly different from me.

16th July, 1918.

My hands are full of notes. Five contos of reis! I ran into the kitchen. "Mother, look . . ."

"But, my daughter . . ." I kissed her on both cheeks: "It does not matter . . ." and, embracing her, I said, "Now you have no more need to make bags . . . I have sold the piano to liberate you from the bags."

17th July, 1918.

The workshop in the basement is closed.

The money derived from the sale of the piano will more than pay all the back bills and help in the family budget during the four coming months.

The doctor came to see the invalids, and it was decided that Lucio should depart for Friburgo in August.

He will go with Gloria-Helena. How could he go alone? The money now will be sufficient for two.

18th July, 1918.

Strong men came to take the piano away through the garden, on their massive shoulders.

When I knew that the men had arrived, I composed myself in my room. I locked the door and nobody dis-

turbed me. Everyone respected the tears which I wanted to shed alone.

*20th July, 1918.*

Father has not slept the whole night long. I think he has an ulcer in the stomach. Nevertheless, I awoke this morning to hear his voice giving orders in the garden. Physical pains, however profound, leave him morally intact.

*23rd July, 1918.*

Sá Carola came to ask me: "May I leave Manduco while I go out? I shall return almost immediately." What else could one do but say "You may." The confectioner, very pleased, added: "He is very good . . ." Sá-Virginia gave him food in a shell which he held in his hand. Luiza thought him very funny, and Gilberto, after seeing him with Milton on his lap, crossing the house as if carrying a child, was won over to Manduco. "He is intelligent, much more intelligent than many folks . . ." Zacarias, who was present, agreed, adding, "More intelligent than all the Deputies together."

*27th July, 1918.*

Every time Father appears in front of him, Manduco does exactly as the children do when they return from school. He goes up to him and kisses his hand. One day, Father, not noticing that it was the monkey who was kissing his hand, said automatically: "God bless you, my child."

*29th July, 1918.*

The money from the piano paid all the overdue accounts, and still there was something left over that would last several months. Henrique would no longer need to work late at night. I wrote to him. "Do not spend your evenings working at the Bank but devote the time to studying." And now, I am able to work restfully in the afternoons, knowing that in the basement there are no longer four creatures monotonously sewing sacks.

Lucas, the baker, the greengrocer, the chemist, Dr. Figueredo and all other bills of every kind have been settled.

Lucas questioned me rather boorishly : " Have you won a sweepstake or had some luck ? " I did not reply. The cretin !

*1st August, 1918.*

Panizoni appeared after dinner. But he was intoxicated and zig-zagged all over the place, his face twisted. I do not know how he managed to climb the stairs, or cross the garden and reach the terrace to fall heavily into a chair in the workroom, smiling all the time while a series of unmeaning vowels escaped his lips.

I saw that Father was irritated when he ordered coffee to be prepared, hot and strong, without sugar. Before the coffee could be served, Panizoni stood up, shrugged his shoulders and began " *La Vecchia Zimarra* " as he had never sung it before. How he exaggerated the gestures as he reeled and staggered about ! But the voice was the same, rich and impetuous, calling up that old time-worn cloak. The steaming cup of coffee remained in the hands of Luiza, awaiting the end of the aria he was singing. When he had finished, Father offered him the cup with an angry gesture. Panizoni looked at it in a strange manner and exclaimed : " I am not drunk, do you hear ? There is no need for this kindness, do you hear . . . ? " With a violent gesture he released the cup and saucer from his hand—Father being tired of holding it so long—and it broke in pieces on the ground, spattering the coffee in turn over the furniture. Then, before our astonished eyes—it was the first time that Panizoni had behaved so grossly in our house—he went out, crossed the terrace and the garden, and was lost in the darkness of the night.

*3rd August, 1918.*

Zacarias came to dinner. I called him into a corner and said to him in a low voice : " You made Mother a

loan, you remember? Just before the Carnival . . . some five hundred milreis. . . .”

“No!” he replied.

“Yes, you did!”

I showed him a new note of five hundred displayed on the palm of my hand and continued: “It is yours.”

Zacarias began to smile: “Ima, my flower,” he said, “you are losing your judgment.”

Manduco was near by, and the painter, addressing him, said: “Isn’t it so, Manduco? Ima is losing her senses?” He continued to fondle the snout of the monkey, and as Mother entered he changed the conversation.

*15th August, 1918.*

Anniversary of the Patroness of Panizoni, Zacarias and Lucio. Our Lady of Glory! . . . Our Lady of Glory! I remember Lulu, who also believed in her, and every year, on this day, used to go and visit her in her chapel on the top of the hill. . . . Once I went with him. Bells rang, people ascended and descended the steps, talking loudly and gesticulating. On every side were booths, where sweets, rosaries and illuminated views of the Chapel-at-the-top were sold, and the band played in the bandstand in front of the Church. There were also fireworks, which, minute by minute, opened peacock tails in the heavens loaded with stars. Lulu stopped at the top and showed me the bay spread out before my eyes and the lamps twinkling. How beautiful it was!

“If I could express all this in music,” he said to me, pointing to the distant city and its waters. “I would deserve to be a son of Our Lady of Glory.”

I am afraid Our Lady of Glory had no desire to be his godmother; furthermore, there are few people for whom she is a godmother.

*17th August, 1918.*

The doctor does not yet think it advisable to let Lucio

go to the mountains. . . . He will have to wait until he is stronger. Perhaps at the beginning of November.

*21st August, 1918.*

Luiza is dictating. "Say to Eurico that I think about him a great deal . . . that I have made many vows for his quick recovery."

I wrote it all down. The same hand has written letters to Zacarias, and it was the same hand that used to write to Juco, pretending to be that of Marcolina. What has happened to Marcolina? Should I go and visit her, to thank her and to return her the hundred milreis that she sent to me on Good Friday?

*23rd August, 1918.*

After twenty days of absence, Panizoni came to life again.

He sent a letter of apologies for his behaviour when he was drunk. Nobody mentioned the subject. In his pocket he brought a Japanese lacquered box, painted red with designs of birds and flowers in gold on the lid. He called us and, when he was satisfied that everyone around him was present, he opened the box. From the depths came the quavering notes of a beautiful tune. "A musical box," we all shouted gaily. Panizoni held it in the palm of his hand.

"What do you think of it?" he enquired.

Many times he opened it and closed it, repeating the miraculous vibrations.

Milton, who was perched on the sill of the window, taking the fresh air, turned himself in the direction of the music, trying to see, perhaps, with his blind eyes, what strange bird it could be.

*30th August, 1918.*

Father has gone to bed again.

He had been asleep for some hours when Zacarias tiptoed into the room that smelled of medicine.

Mother, Amparo and I were keeping him company.

"Did you think you would find me dead?" asked Father, as he opened his eyes without warning.

"But," he persisted, "I am alive, let me tell you."

Making signs to me to draw near, he said: "Give me a hand, Ima, lift up the pillows."

I did so willingly, placing a large pillow under his narrow shoulders. Zacarias ran to the other side of the bed, helping him up into a sitting position. For one moment, and one moment only, my arms crossed those of Zacarias, at about the level of the sick one's chest, with our hands on the same level.

Father cheered up.

"One thing you will promise me, Zacarias . . . when I die, do not leave me here. I want to be buried in the Church of Lampadosa. You promise me?"

Zacarias promised him in order to satisfy him.

"I promise," he replied, "I shall do as you have asked me with the greatest of pleasure." That greatest-of-pleasure, coming as it did, made his cheeks burn. Father thought it a huge joke.

"Sit down here," he said, pointing to a corner of the bed. "And now, tell me what news there is. . . ."

Amparo remembered. "Father, doctor has forbidden conversation . . ."

"The doctor can go to Hell," pronounced the sick man, feeling annoyed. Mother moved her head regretfully as if to say, "Let him do as he thinks fit."

Zacarias plunged his hand into his pocket and brought out some theatre tickets.

"Do you know what these are, Chico? . . . They are tickets for the first night of Clara Della Guardia, at São Pedro, next week. . . . I bought four, three for you, Amparo and Imaculata, and one for myself. . . ."

Father's blue eyes opened widely.

"What, Clara Della Guardia?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Famous Italian actress.



Zacarias continued : " Either you take your medicine at the regular hours, follow the diet and do not make yourself irritable, or good-bye to Clara Della Guardia. . . ."

Father did not allow him to finish : " Ah, you are completely mistaken. Next week I shall go on foot."

Shrugging his shoulders, he said, " Not even this illness will stop me from seeing Clara Della Guardia . . ." But he did not continue. The coughing returned, and he never uttered a word for hours.

*1st September, 1918.*

" Father ! Fioravanti is here," and I showed the shoe-maker up. Fioravanti held out his wax-stained hand, which my father grasped vigorously between his. A smile stretched from ear to ear on Father's face.

" I came here on a little visit," Fioravanti informed him, " a doctor's visit." And very quietly, as if disclosing a secret, he said, " Chico ! you need a change, take your medicine and don't worry. Do you know why ?"

In a tired voice, his eyes hardly opened, Father replied : " I know . . . the first night of Clara Della Guardia, next week."

" So you know," Fioravanti rubbed his hands.

" And in ' La Nave.'"

" What, in ' La Nave ' ?" he exclaimed. Then, as if quite ready to be cured by my hands, he called : " Ima, my daughter, I must get well . . ." and enquired anxiously, for the first time, " Is it my medicine time, yet ?"

*6th September, 1918.*

The first night of ' La Nave ' is due on the eleventh. Zacarias came to-day with two more tickets.

" I am taking Seu Liro and Panizoni as well," he remarked, and turning towards Mother, " Would you like to go also ?" he asked.

Mother smiled. " You go, I shall stay . . ."

"Let us all go—Father, Amparo, Lucio, Gloria, I, Seu Liro, Zacarias, Panizoni, Fioravanti . . ."

From his bookcase, in which he had all D'Annunzio's books, father showed me to-day a copy of *La Nave*, on the grey cover of which was a picture of a nude man, in kneeling position, with chisel and hammer in his hand, carving the figure of an angel on the prow of his ship.

8th September, 1918.

Seu Liro did not give his lesson this morning. Nor did any of us three work, either. We were consumed with curiosity to learn about the tragedy of which we had been hearing so much these last three days. Our teacher spent more than an hour describing the plot of the drama.

9th September, 1918.

Panizoni telephoned Lucas' shop and asked him to tell us that he would be here the day after to-morrow at eight prompt, with a motor-car. It is getting foolish, all this talk over a play at a theatre.

Luiza asked me : "You will tell me about it afterwards, won't you ?"

"I shall tell you, I shall tell you . . ."

Over and over again Amparo and Gloria remarked : "How slowly time passes !"

Mother is not interested in the event, nor in Della Guardia, but only in the miracle. Father, picturing to himself his going forth on the journey to São Pedro to see and hear Della Guardia, has greatly improved at the prospect, yes, improved astonishingly.

At coffee-time, Mother remarked, somewhat puzzled :

"It is not only the 'Drowned' that work miracles. Poets also make cures . . ." She was looking at Lucio.

11th September, 1918.

An incredible excitement pervades the house. Amparo runs from one side to another, posing before mirrors. Gloria has been ready since early in the day. Professor

Liro, Zacarias and Fioravanti all look like forsaken children.

During dinner, hardly a word was spoken by Father, and the meal was just bolted. An exuberance and an excess of excitement was displayed by all. Liro advised that it would be better if we were to leave immediately . . . the motor-car may arrive late with Panizoni. "He is coming at eight sharp."

If it were possible, all the clocks would have been advanced. Father's silence made me anxious. Had he received bad news from Recife? I wondered. No, it could not be that, because the mail had not brought him any letter from Henrique. Perhaps he was not feeling well. We were all ready to leave. Panizoni had arrived. The automobile was waiting. By the clock in the dining-room it was five minutes to eight. Father got up from the table looking very pale; he went to his room. Mother followed him and returned a few minutes later, obviously upset and requesting silence with a tormented look on her face. "Ima," she said, "quickly, where is Father's remedy?" While we were looking for the bottle, and Mother was running to the kitchen to prepare a hot-water bottle, with the help of Sá-Virginia and Luiza, Father's room began to be filled. There he was, lying full length on the bed, his eyes congested, his collar open, struggling for his breath. I gave him a spoonful of medicine. He swallowed it. His stomach balked and as he returned its contents he hid his face in the pillow. Fioravanti, Zacarias, Liro, Panizoni, all looked at him without speaking. Mother appeared and made him lie down naturally, placed the hot-water bottle on his stomach. For some minutes, Father continued to heave, his eyes closed. Later, somewhat composed, he opened his eyes and saw those around him ready to leave. Gloria, in rose-coloured silk, was ready with her bag in her hand. Father murmured: "I am not going to the theatre, but you go." Who would have the courage to leave him like this? We stayed.

I seated myself by Mother on the edge of the bed, holding one of Father's hands, which burned like coal. Gloria and Amparo, seated in chairs near the wardrobe, never moved. Lucio and Gilberto, who were with Panizoni, never stirred, their gaze fixed on Father who was suffering.

"Now, Chico, feeling better?"

Father smiled with his eyes closed: "Who was it that said we were not going to hear 'La Nave'?" enquired the baritone.

Why did he have to mention that subject? To make Father feel that he was to blame for our having missed the show we had all longed to see?

"Why?"

Panizoni, freeing himself from Lucio and Gilberto, came up to the bed and said quietly: "Chico, what do you say to hearing a little of 'La Nave'?"

Mother had wanted to say that he should not be disturbed, but it was too late, because Father, smiling, his eyes half-closed, replied: "How, Panizoni, unless you remember..."

"If I remember?" Panizoni cleared his throat and filled his lungs.

Then with rapid gestures, as if on a stage, he described the first scene of "La Nave"; repeated, with that richness of voice that belongs to him alone, the introductory passages of the tragedy of a people launching one more ship into the sea. . . .

Panizoni became transfigured. He was now Marco Gratico, to be, a few minutes later, the Deaconess Ena, or the Master of the Waters, or the Pilot. . . .

What a prodigious memory was Panizoni's!

Father began to open his eyes, but suddenly Panizoni stopped and said, smiling broadly, "I cannot remember more."

"Try," cried Seu Liro.

Zacarias suggested: "Chico has the book."

Lucio added: "I shall go and look for it," and in the twinkling of an eye he brought the volume.

Panizoni opened it. Father commanded: "Go on, Panizoni."

The baritone opened the book and went on till the end, without a pause.

What did we care for the world outside? The melody of the world was within us. . . .

Thus, "La Nave"—which we once identified with the genius of Della Guardia, came to us through the voice of Panizoni.

Father was smiling now, with his eyes opened.

And that night was, and shall always remain for me, the most beautiful of the twenty years of my life.

## FOURTH BOOK

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### I

THE news of a far-distant phantom appeared first in the daily newspapers, and gradually filtered in here and there in a bare half-dozen words cabled from North Africa or Southern Europe. Then it grew rapidly, assuming vast proportions that filled whole pages of the press.

The wave spread, and no longer could human powers stem it or impede its progress. The very skies looked askance as the spectre rushed, or rather flew, from the West to the East.

The authorities took precautions, but always too late, as the grim plague with its invisible talons laid waste the country. The phantom had various names. The "grippe," some called it, others, "flu," and again others, "the Spanish evil." It was an epidemic that struck one dead almost at once. The papers raised a terrible cry, urging instant measures and a plan of defence for the terrorized populations. In the north, as in all parts where the silent spectre stalked, they were dying at the rate of a thousand a minute. Whole cities strewn with rotting corpses awaiting untainted and brave hands to dig their graves. The end of the world was at hand.

### 2

All activities in Rio had come to a standstill for a week now. The Government had first decreed a state of emergency for thirty days, followed by a week's holiday. An air of utter desolation hung heavily over the lovely city.

Emergency hospitals were being put up, in schools, in

barrack squares, under the arches of churches. The doctors redoubled their heroic efforts in an almost vain attempt to save lives. The contagion attacked entire families, and the heartrending scene could be witnessed everywhere of men shuddering with fever bouts and shaken by savage coughing, attempting to aid their weaker brothers and sons in greater suffering than they, often in their death-throes.

And like God the spectre was omnipresent.

### 3

They died for want of quinine and also from excess of quinine. They died for want of air and from excess of sun in their veins. The daily papers appeared as dwindled as the victims themselves, reduced to two pages. The most terrifying news was dinned like gramophone records in everyone's ear.

The "flu" was killing about half a million. The cemeteries were overflowing with dead. There was even a shortage of graves. One afternoon, as he wandered, pale and feverish, through the house looking after his various patients, Seu Chico noticed that his remaining apprentice was missing. This lad, as also his son Lucio, were the only members of the household uncontaminated in that inferno of twisted mouths, of chests wrecked by coughs and heads burning with fever. It was a blessing to have Lucio, the weakest of his sons, fit and well, and the apprentice able to get about. It was they who went to the chemists to have prescriptions made up, and to buy food in the town. It was truly pathetic to see Lucio, forgetful of his skinny frame, standing in queues for hours on end, in the midst of the sickly crowd at the centres where the Government distributed food and milk for sale. The same queues could be seen before the chemists' shops. Lucio nearly always returned with his body bruised by the shoves and elbowings he received in consequence, and recounted to his father what the latter also read in the papers—the misery

afoot in the streets, the difficulties of transport, and the hunger which would soon make its appearance. . . .

Seu Chico waited for hours and hours for his apprentice to return. Might he perhaps have been stricken down with the fever and taken to a hospital?

Just before nightfall, however, he received news that the Government, in need of men to bury the corpses, had taken the desperate course of seizing the few who were still immune whom they found about the town. The apprentice had been thus taken by force and by now was probably digging graves.

Seu Chico, without delay, dashed off a telegram to the President of the Republic protesting against this violation of the liberty of the individual.

Needless to say, the President, busy opening new hospitals, never read this appeal, and, anyhow, since when has a President had the time to read telegrams from a humble and unknown citizen?

#### 4

In Paula Mattos Street there was hardly a room to be found in that human warren in which there was not a sick or dying person, or a table set with four lighted candles on which reposed a body stiff in death. There was also a great shortage of men to carry the corpses to the graveyard. Everywhere bodies were rotting in narrow rooms, and the very air stank of putrid flesh alive with worms.

The Public Health Department was flooded with requests for help. Its lorries drove around the city collecting the dead, who were driven away piled high in open vans, their great eyes staring blindly in the sunlight.

“ Here comes the lorry ” . . .

“ The lorry ? ” . . .

The truck climbed the hill two or three times a day. The sick, from the depths of their filthy rooms, smelling of



urine and albumen, shook with fear . . . their hour was near at hand, as they knew full well.

"Look, here's the lorry!"

Along it came, stopping here and there. Men with hurried, heedless movements, some of them seized with the fever themselves, clambered down and tugged, in fact almost dragged along, corpses with wide-open eyes, their clothes in horrible disarray, flinging them—as they might garbage—into their vans.

One morning a man died in one of these warrens. His friends decided to carry him into the middle of the street, where candles were lit at his head and feet awaiting the arrival of the lorry. For two days he remained thus, the lorry always passing with a full load, and slowly the candles guttered out. Rain fell, and still the body lay there, completely covered with mud.

## 5

The neighbour at No. 38, the maker of sacks, on seeing her blind daughter, who had died four days ago, decompose before her very eyes, took her in desperation in her arms as if she were a child and strode down the hill towards the "morgue" in Relação Street, where she begged them to give her a span of earth.

The body of one of Seu Lucas' daughters was awaiting transport.

The stench arising from this body, which had known but twenty years of life, was so overwhelming that, as one of the lorries was passing, Seu Lucas stopped it and asked that his daughter, who had died almost a week ago, be taken off.

The lorry-driver took pity on the old man. His van, however, was already overflowing with corpses. He suggested an exchange, taking his daughter and leaving behind a boy who had only died the night before.

"It's the only way I can suggest."

Seu Lucas accepted gratefully.

The driver, completely indifferent, as if handling samples or empty bottles from a bar, turned over a corpse or two and drew out the dead boy, thus making room for Seu Lucas' girl.

"I'll be back to-morrow and pick up this other one," with which the driver handed over to him the body of the boy and drove off.

6

The churches were packed with the faithful. Never had God seemed nearer to their souls. The 'flu seemed to be spreading ever wider. The carts and vans rolled along loaded more heavily than before, whilst the Government continued hunting down all the able-bodied men in the streets.

7

Of all those attacked by fever in Seu Chico's house, Imaculata was the only one who showed no signs of recovery. If anything, she appeared to be getting worse, but in spite of it all she looked lovelier than ever, lying there in her narrow bed.

The fever held on tenaciously, her coughs continued endlessly. The doctor came to see her several times and gave her injections. Nothing seemed to be of any use, and one night Seu Chico became thoroughly alarmed.

The patient became delirious, talking and muttering wildly. He called for the doctor to come in all haste, under the delusion that the doctor was at his beck and call. Imaculata smiled wanly :

"Don't get alarmed, Father . . . it's nothing."

Already, however, her finger-nails were turning purple and dark spots appeared on her fair skin. At about ten at night the doctor made a sudden appearance and looked her

over carefully. Around him the eyes of Seu Chico, Zacarias and Dona Josefa gazed in anxious enquiry. In a corner Aunt Thereza stared as if in a dream. Sá-Virginia, wrapped in a shawl from which peered her wizened face, was saying her beads, held in her black hands still hot with the fever which was gnawing at her vitals. Imaculata herself watched without a word, merely raising her needle-pricked fingers to her curly head from time to time.

As he left, the doctor whispered to her father :

“ Her case is quite hopeless.”

Seu Chico became rigid, and only refrained from bursting into tears out of pity for his wife whose eldest daughter was about to die.

That night of agony and despair seemed endless. Imaculata, clear-minded to the last, begged her father to send for the parish priest of Saint Anthony's Church, where she was enrolled as a Daughter of Mary. Perhaps she was going to die, in which case she would like to die without sin. Her father smiled caressingly : “ What an idea, my darling . . .”

She insisted, however. “ Please call the Priest.”

They gave in to her request. The priest was roaming about the hill, from house to house, visiting the sick.

So busy was he in his perambulations from door to door and from street to street that he had not divested himself of his lace robes, carrying the Viaticum of the Sacred Sacrament pressed to his breast, wrapped in his robes of white silk embroidered with gold. He made the rounds alone, without an acolyte or anyone to assist him in his task of saving souls.

He arrived at Seu Chico's house, in haste.

He confessed the girl for a few minutes, while in the passage that led to the closed door of her room thronged the members of the household, wrapped in rugs and shawls and praying softly, interrupted frequently by cavernous coughing. Sá Carola came along running, bringing with

her her monkey Manduco, who stared at the others with eyes sadder than ever.

The door slowly opened, and the priest called for Lucio to help him whilst he administered the Communion and Extreme Unction.

Aunt Thereza, who had remained in the shadow, entered the room with her sister as far as the bed of the dying girl and placed herself by its side, gazing tenderly at Imaculata, who smiled gently at her. Observing that Manduco was approaching her bed, Imaculata stretched out her arms and, with her hands whose nails were turning an ever deeper purple, she softly stroked his head.

How endlessly the night dragged on.

To Imaculata's ears reached the rumble in the streets of the carts with their load of corpses, just as formerly the dog-catchers' carts had rolled along after their prey.

To her ears also reached the cries of her neighbours, cries of pain and anguish from the not-far-distant warrens. The news that Padre Evangelista was administering Extreme Unction to Imaculata spread quickly.

A few of the neighbours came along shaking with fever, many wrapped in soiled bedcovers, and greasy old cotton clothes, amongst them the Portuguese woman who had lost her blind daughter. They prayed softly. Zacarias, from a corner, stared at her with his great kindly eyes.

Imaculata's breathing became harder as she called for her brothers and sisters one by one. She wished to see them all around her.

"Lucio—Lucio——"

"Here I am."

She smiled. Aunt Thereza seized one of her hands and crooned : "Sleep, my child—sleep."

Before the girl could reply, she went on : "I'll sing you that song . . ." And poor old Aunt Thereza started singing softly, in an almost inaudible voice, the old cradle song with which she had sung her children to sleep in days gone by.

"Mother ! Father !" Imaculata called out weakly.

Aunt Thereza stopped her song, and Dona Josefa put on a stony face—no tears for her.

Imaculata's breathing faltered more and more.

Around her bed stood her brothers and sisters, her parents, Aunt Thereza, Sá-Virginia, Luiza, Sá Carola, the neighbours, as well as Panizoni and Zacarias.

Suddenly she cried : " Zacarias ! Zacarias ! "

The painter came nearer to the bed.

" What is it, Ima ? What is it ? "

She opened her eyes wide, filled with the vision of approaching death.

She was still conscious.

" Will you promise me one thing ? "

" What, Ima ? "

" That you'll paint me when I'm dead."

She scarcely finished the sentence. Zacarias felt a sob in his throat.

Along the street of Paula Mattos a lorry rumbled, heavily laden. From afar a dog barked, and shortly afterwards in a neighbouring chicken-run a cock crowed.

## 8

Imaculata died as she had lived, without fuss, and with only the fear that those she left behind would suffer because she had gone. She died as dawn was breaking.

Seu Chico saw her grow pale, her eyes close and her hands fall to the ground—those pathetic, sore-pricked fingers.

A silence fell.

Her father touched her lightly and, turning round, announced in a muted voice : " She's dead."

Around him Dona Josefa, Aunt Thereza and his children prayed softly, some biting their lips to prevent their tears from falling.

They placed her on the long table in the workroom on

the best coverlet, the silk one with a design of green branches which had originally belonged to Dona Josefa's wedding chest and was kept carefully in a trunk destined in turn for her eldest son's trousseau. Panizoni went to the Church of Saint Antonio to fetch a crucifix of silver and a few silver candlesticks, which Padre Evangelista readily lent. As he was leaving the church he came upon Marcolina, looking very pale and haggard. She had just been discharged from hospital and looked like a wraith.

"What are you doing there, Panizoni?"

The baritone looked at her sadly.

"Imaculata . . . she's . . ."

The girl staggered, seized Panizoni's arm, loaded with the crucifix and candlesticks, and burst into a flood of tears in the middle of the street.

9

The news of Imaculata's death spread over the hill, as did the return of Marcolina, hanging on to Panizoni's arm.

As she entered the workroom and saw the body of the girl lying there so still, she embraced it and kissed it on the cheek, murmuring: "My Ima . . . dear Ima mine."

Dona Josefa went up to her godchild and embraced her, a long embrace after four long years of absence and longing.

"Godmother, dear Godmother!"

Her face bathed in tears, she called aloud for all to hear: "Godmother, why did God not take me instead of her? . . . How unjust! Poor dear Ima, poor Ima!"

And the two women remained holding each other closely and weeping aloud.

10

Maria do Céu felt she must be having a slight touch of fever.

The bar was getting emptier every time; they could not see how they could remain open much longer.

The talk there was only about the epidemic. The 'cello player had died on the previous night.

Maria's hands were burning hot. She thought of going home at first and then felt it was not worth while. She would find no one there any longer. Her son had gone. How beautiful he had looked with his eyes closed in his little coffin. That accursed 'flu. Some said it was the fault of the Germans, those damned Huns.

She was entirely alone in the world now. Quite alone, without even an address for anyone to write to. She remembered "him," who had never told her where he lived nor even his name. All he had ever said was that he painted. Not that that wasn't obvious. His clothes smelt of it, even his body. She brought to mind Henrique, so kindly and gentle. More boy than man. How she had made him suffer! . . . Why? She wondered. She still kept a letter he had written her on the eve of his departure for Pernambuco.

Why was she thinking of him? She must be having a bout of fever. All the good and bad things of her life were dancing there before her eyes. The bar seemed to be stretching out endlessly. Should she leave, and if so, where should she go, and, if it came to that, for what reason? Why?

## II

Seu Chico left early. He went to the house of the friend who owned the furniture store in Cattete Street, taking with him the measurements of his dead daughter. If need be he would build her coffin with his own hands. He would do anything, the impossible even, so that Imaculata's body should not be dragged away in a lorry. And, ironically enough, built the coffin was, from the planks torn from the stage of his own "Harlequin Theatre."

It was past midday when he returned home, followed by

a tall mulatto carrying on his head the unpainted raw pine coffin.

As he again viewed the table on which his daughter was laid, covered with the flowers her sister Amparo had picked in the garden, he could not restrain his tears.

In a corner he saw Zacarias, pencil in hand, carrying out the dead girl's last request.

He called his wife and Amparo, unmoved by the presence of Marcolina, who begged his forgiveness for her past misdeeds as she embraced him. Forgiveness for what, he wondered. Surely in face of death or love no errors existed. . . .

Seu Chico took charge of all the funeral arrangements. He had purchased at Abel's shop the silk and the tacks for fixing the lining of the coffin within and without. He further explained that he had arranged with the General Hospital, by means of the death certificate given by the doctor, for the burial of his daughter. He had also purchased a burial lot in St. John the Baptist's cemetery. The funeral was to take place at four in the afternoon. Seu Chico had arranged with one of the old four-wheelers, that had begun to reappear in the streets, to carry the coffin. The coachman had charged him a hundred milreis for the trip, to which Seu Chico, perforce, agreed. The hospital, however, could not guarantee grave-diggers, so he was sending Fioravanti, Zacarias and Panizoni ahead to help him overcome the shortage of labour and lend a hand at opening Imaculata's grave.

Dona Josefa, with the aid of Marcolina, Sá-Virginia, Amparo, Luiza and Gloria-Helena, lined the inside and outside of the coffin with blue silk.

Great was everyone's surprise, however, when Inacia appeared, bearing in her shaky hand a pathetic bunch of flowers.

Tears streamed down her face as she murmured :

"She always smiled at me as she passed by the House of the Owls."



Shortly before four, the ancient four-wheeler, drawn by two decrepit horses, drew up before the gates of Seu Chico's garden.

The hour of departure was at hand.

Seu Chico gave orders for all to take their last farewell of Imaculata. One by one her brothers and sisters kissed her and tenderly stroked her white cheeks. Zacarias kissed her as well, and Amparo, who was watching him closely, burst into a fearful sobbing, as in a flash she realized whose was the handwriting of the painter's anonymous correspondent.

Dona Josefa found it impossible to weep.

The lid was placed on the coffin, in which they carried Imaculata's remains through the garden grounds to the street after passing through the heavy iron gates. The coffin was laid reverently on the floor of the old coach with its ramshackle wheels, drawn by its sad-looking horses.

Zacarias and Seu Chico then entered the conveyance, taking the back seats.

Dona Josefa called out : " Chico . . ." and then blurted out : " I'm coming too."

No one attempted to hold her back. She climbed quickly on to the carriage-steps, forgetful of the corpse lying on the carriage-floor, as she squeezed in between her husband and the painter. On the coffin Amparo placed old Inacia's flowers, whereupon all started weeping aloud.

" Ima—— My Ima——"

From windows and doors people stared at them with a death-like air.

The mournful conveyance wound its way slowly down the hill and crossed the city with its stench of death and of decayed flowers.

The painter, Seu Chico and Dona Josefa watched the endless squares and streets go by without a word.

Together they travelled with rigid limbs as if in fear

of profaning with their feet the coffin in which Imaculata slept.

13

In the cemetery, Fioravanti, Professor Liro and Panizoni awaited them. Imaculata's coffin was set down from the carriage, and the procession moved slowly on towards the freshly opened grave. Along the paths in the cemetery coffins were stacked one on the other. Corpses wrapped in cotton sheets were to be found piled together awaiting the moment to be thrown in a common grave. Others would be cremated. The ground itself could not hold any more.

Seu Chico had previously presented his papers at the gateway to the cemetery, where he was curtly informed that no more graves were available. They advised him to leave the coffin where it was, and they would see that it would be buried in its turn. Seu Chico protested and asked to be shown the lot he had purchased and for a supply of spades. He would see to it himself that a grave was dug for his daughter. The officials gave in, and the weird procession continued along the cemetery.

On reaching the lot that had been set aside for them, with Seu Chico at their head, Zacarias, Panizoni and Professor Liro set to digging the few spans of earth. Dona Josefa appeared unconscious of everything, when, suddenly, noting Professor Liro taking a breather, in one quick movement she snatched the spade from his grasp and, as if insane with grief, started digging madly to help her husband and the others, repeating endlessly :

“ She *shall* have her own grave ! She shall, she shall ! ! ”

14

They returned in the same old four-wheeler.

Seu Chico cried ceaselessly, his head resting on his wife's

shoulder, as slowly the carriage went forward. Dona Josefa wiped her husband's cheeks with her heavy hands.

"There now, cry no more, Chico," she admonished, while he repeated to himself: "Ima, my poor dear girl——"

Dona Josefa kept a steady countenance as she exclaimed: "Remember the others!"

This mention of "the others" was merely to force him to pull himself together, and as they turned a corner he saw a group of barefoot boys flying a gaily coloured kite. His heart contracted with a sudden fear that on this new soil of Brazil, which he loved so dearly because it was the soil of his children, and his as well on that account—the soil in which he had buried his eldest daughter—that on this soil his children might have to go about thus, in rags and barefoot.

Could it be, he wondered, that he would never have the joy of seeing his children rise high as the sun that gilded the tall palms?

THE END

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